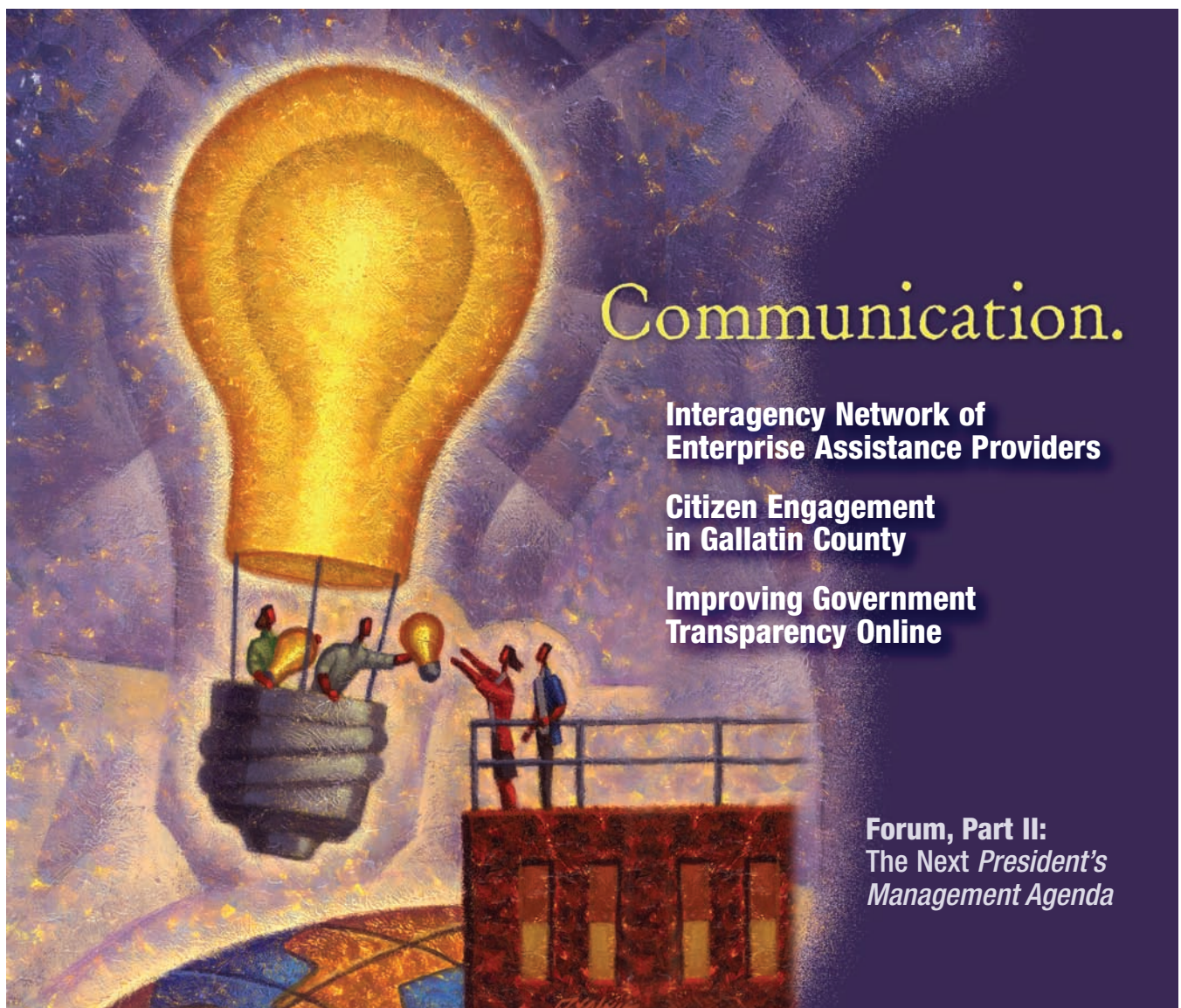


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WITH PUBLIC SECTOR RELEVANCE

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Speaker: Ray Rivera

Tuesday, June 3

The WLP Scorecard is an online real-time benchmarking, decision support, and performance measurement tool that can be used by both learning and non-learning professionals. Public sector professionals are invited to learn how to benchmark learning investments against leading corporations and federal organizations, and report your results in business terms.

Power Steps: 10 Principles for Leadership Success

Speaker: Percy Thomas

Tuesday, June 3

Discover 10 essential principles for leading yourself and others. Learn the Power Steps: 10 Principles of the Leadership Success model. You will learn how each principle relates to success in your personal and professional life. Participants will practice developing a vision and mission statement to become an effective leader.

Community of Practice Roundtable: Public Sector

Speaker: Anthony Hill

Monday, June 2

Join the speakers for a series of topics relevant to public sector employees representing federal, state, and local government.

A Federal Family Portrait: Boomers Passing the Torch to Gen X/Y

Speaker: Andrew Krzmarzick

Wednesday, June 4

As Boomers exit the workforce, federal, state and local government agencies are exploring ways to pass the torch. Generations X and Y are saying, "Well done, mom and dad, but now it's our turn." Boomers respond: "Not so fast! We still have something to contribute." This session creates a forum to ask and answer: What are the unique traits of each generation and their workplace impact? What are the implications of this shift in the federal sphere? How is government addressing the transition and competing with the private sector for employees? Highly interactive, this session delves into a phenomenon that will have a profound effect on our workforce for the foreseeable future.

Ensuring the Transfer of Vital Skills

Speaker(s): J.P. Orlando, Scott Brown

Monday, June 2

We've all heard of "just-in-time" training, but what about "just-in-case" training? For some professionals, sometimes the most important skills are the ones they may never use. Join our speakers for a fascinating look at skills transfer in the medical and law enforcement arena, and how to ensure the skills are there when they're needed.



Contents

Spring 2008

Viewpoints

- 4** *The Manager's Musings*
by Warren Master

Feature Article

- 5** *Virtual Networks: An Opportunity for Government*
by Frank DiGiammarino and Lena Trudeau

Theme Articles

Communication

- 12** *Interagency Network of Enterprise Assistance Providers*
by Carroll Thomas

- 17** *Citizen Engagement in Gallatin County*
by Earl Mathers

- 22** *Improving Government Transparency Online*
by Jerry Brito

Forum

The Next

President's Management

Agenda

- 27** *Introduction and Overview—Part II*
by Alan P. Balutis

- 29** *Human Capital—The Most Critical Asset*
by Stephen Benowitz

- 33** *The Courage to Change When Challenged*
by Tom Hughes

- 36** *Acquisition Challenges, 2008 and Beyond*
by Shirl Nelson

- 41** *Inherently Governmental Functions: At a Tipping Point?*
by Allan V. Burman

- 44** *The President, Outcomes, and Performance*
by Robert Tobias

- 47** *Shifting Federal Telework into Drive*
by Stephen W. T. O'Keeffe

- 50** *Now Is the Time for Collaboration*
by Robert J. O'Neill Jr. and Elizabeth K. Kellar

- 52** *The Challenge of Managing across Boundaries*
by Mark A. Abramson and Alan P. Balutis

Articles

HR Management

- 55** *Recruiting and Engaging the Federal Workforce*
by Bill Trahan

- 63** *Telework: Breaking New Ground*
by Stanley Kaczmarczyk

- 68** *FEMA, Katrina, and Operations Research*
by Richard Sylves

- 72** *Federal Contracting for Food and Refreshments*
by Daniel Hall

- 77** *Better Thinking: An Asset in Any Organization*
by John N. Mangieri

- 79** *Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My!*
by Grimaldi

Emergency Management

Acquisition Management

Departments

Culture of Bureaucracy

The Uncivil Servant

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PUBLISHER

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EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Letters to the Editor, correspondence about series, and books for review: Warren Master, Editor-in-Chief, *The Public Manager*, 8120 SE Windjammer Way, Hobe Sound, FL 33455.

E-mail: wciwmaster@aol.com.

Web site: www.thepublicmanager.org.

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE AND ADVERTISING

Address all correspondence regarding subscriptions, availability and prices of back issues, bulk sales, advertising rates and information, and reprint permissions to: Carrie Blustin, Publisher, *The Public Manager*, 2000 Corporate Ridge, McLean, VA 22102-7805.

Phone: 703-917-7210 (direct).

Fax: 571-633-7679. E-mail: cblustin@lmi.org.

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Synaptic Bureaucracy

In his 2002 book, *Synaptic Self*, Joseph LeDoux explains how unlike other cells in the human organism, neurons—the cellular tissue of the brain—have nerve endings that communicate instantaneously with other brain cells to achieve a common, integrative outcome. Wow! Can you imagine how much more responsive and successful public bureaucracies would be if they had synapse-like mechanisms that could send and receive messages in such a dynamic and egalitarian way?

It occurs to me that many of the “core values” that appear on most of today’s government agency Web sites (transparency, inclusiveness, agility, citizen-centeredness, etc.) would be much better served by this kind of machinery than by the cumbersome, secretive, stovepiped, and hierarchical arrangements most commonly identified with old-line public-sector bureaucracies. In fact, LeDoux offers a compliment to mammals—and *Homo sapiens* in particular—in comparing humankind to the more nonsynaptic vertebrates that preceded us. That would be—uh—dinosaurs and the like.

Wired Communication

Focusing on more effective ways for government to communicate, our feature article, by **Frank DiGiammarino** and **Lena Trudeau** of the National Academy of Public Administration, identifies many new opportunities presented by virtual networks. Such an approach, enabled by advances in Web 2.0, offers new tools to collect data, increase the availability of information, and connect with more diverse stakeholders to innovate and drive change. This is followed by an article by **Carroll Thomas** on an unusual partnership of government agencies and private businesses that communicate and collaborate to achieve mutually advantageous results. As strange as it may sound, the Interagency Network of Enterprise Assistance Providers is a network of federal (and some private and nonprofit) organizations whose primary mission is to assist small businesses. Next, **Earl Mathers**, county administrator in Gallatin County, Montana, edifies us on how citizen engagement in the shadow of Yellowstone National Park involves talking about growth without bringing the decision-making process to a standstill. And **Jerry Brito** closes the loop in his piece on improving government transparency online. That is, spelling out what government must do to be more transparent by making data available electronically and more easily accessible.

The Manager’s Musings

by Warren Master

Other Recommendations

In Part II of a two-part forum begun in the winter 2007 issue, **Alan Balutis** continues his exploration of the next *President’s Management Agenda*—with a special emphasis on how to go about implementing many of the changes

suggested earlier. Articles include discussions on human resources and technology as well as acquisition and a focus on execution. **Steve Benowitz** gets us started by reflecting on government’s human capital—its most critical asset. Next up is **Tom Hughes**, who speculates on public organizations’ courage to change when challenged, including providing inexpensive high-speed broadband to the public to improve customer service. Then, **Shirl Nelson** lays out her thoughts on key challenges in acquisition, addressing the causes of recent acquisition failures. **Allan Burman** follows with his related article, which probes into the workability of our current conception of inherently governmental functions. And with respect to execution—what to keep and what to discard—**Robert Tobias** adds his views on how changing from outputs to outcomes and evaluating individuals and organizations on results will require significant cultural change and the leadership to drive it; **Stephen O’Keeffe** puts his oar in on shifting federal telework into drive. Moreover, **Robert O’Neill Jr.** and **Elizabeth Kellar** provide a hefty dose of what can be done to significantly increase intergovernmental collaboration—and with what effects; **Mark Abramson** and **Alan Balutis** close with their article on the challenge of managing across boundaries.

More Updates

On the human capital front, **Bill Trahant** brings us up to date on how federal agencies are recruiting and engaging employees, and **Stan Kaczmarczyk** gives us some insight into how telework is breaking new ground in this area as well. Also, after hearing a lot about post-Katrina fixes (and the lack thereof) over the past two issues, **Rick Sylves** adds his take on the nexus between the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Katrina, and operations research. Next, with an eye toward the younger set of procurement officials, **Daniel Hall** provides an insider’s guide on contracting for food and refreshments. **John Mangieri** tells us how we can improve our ability to think effectively, critically, and creatively. And finally, **Grimaldi** lightens the message board with his piece on this year’s national elections—Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My!

Virtual Networks



An Opportunity for Government

by Frank DiGiammarino
and Lena Trudeau

The increasing power of computing is enabling a new generation of Web-based applications—Web 2.0—to harness collective intelligence in the public sector.

Today's government relies on a broad network that extends beyond other public-sector entities to include the private sector, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and individual citizens. Government entities need to work effectively across boundaries that impede the collaboration and information sharing required to innovate and change.

“Virtualizing” these networks gives government the opportunity to extend outside its institutions and employ the resources of nongovernmental organizations and the citizenry at large. It also provides government leaders with new ways to reach deeper into their own organizations to leverage the wealth of information and ideas that reside there, stifled by the natural hierarchy of government and the “operating silos” that hierarchy has created.

The key to understanding this new model lies in the increasing power of computing and the way this enables a new generation of Web-based applications—known as Web 2.0, or the interactive Web—to harness collective intelligence. The virtual network is replete with a new lexicon of tools like social bookmarking, wikis, blogs, really simple syndication (RSS) feeds, and the ability to “tag” keywords throughout a document. Yet the power of this phenomenon does not reside in the technology itself, but in its potential as a tool for leaders grappling with industrial-era hierarchies and looking to increase agility, extend reach, and maximize efficiency.

Meeting the Changing Needs of Citizens

The interactive Web is forcing some of government's time-worn institutions to rethink their relationship with their most important client: the public. A good illustration of this kind of reckoning can be found in our municipal library systems, which—in the age of Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble megastores—are under increasing pressure to stay relevant and engaged with the communities they serve.

“The younger generation today is wired differently than people in my generation,” said sixty-nine-year-old Harry Courtright, explaining to the *New York Times* last summer why the fifteen-branch library system he oversees in Arizona's Maricopa County jettisoned the once-sacred Dewey decimal system of classifying books in favor of one designed for the majority of users, who come to browse without a particular title in mind.

Courtright and his colleagues are facing fundamental questions of identity. What is a library in the twenty-first century? How does the role of librarian change in light of customer reviews and other peer-to-peer networking opportunities that online bookstores routinely provide? Will the one-third of Americans who count themselves among Generation Y ultimately expect public libraries to work more like Netflix? Will we eventually be a society of on-demand books?

The implications for government, which delivers a wide range of services to an ever more sophisticated public, are immense. Libraries provide just one example of the opportunity virtual networks offer public-sector leaders—faced with expanding mandates, increasingly constrained budgets, and unwieldy organizational structures—to rethink their service delivery model.

Emergence of the Virtual Network

The paradigms that define our current understanding of organizations can be traced back to the 1930s and early public administration scholars like Luther Gulick, who claimed that organizations should departmentalize work by purpose, process, clientele, or place and should not combine dissimilar activities in single agencies. Gulick argued that although most work contains all four elements, systems must organize around only one of these core principles, to the exclusion of the other three. Today's government institutions reflect this thinking, with agencies that provide services and information often managed in vertical silos.

Virtual networks, in contrast, place a premium on breaking down these silos and connecting various audiences across (and within) them for better delivery to the citizen. The “wiki” platform for virtual collaboration takes its name from the Hawaiian word for “fast” and features built-in functionality that allows quick content analysis—users can see the labels that have been applied to content, how content has been edited and reviewed, and the relationships that have formed between various pieces of data. This allows for nearly limitless access and searchability that is shifting the structure of thought from the hierarchical and vertical to the diffuse and horizontal. Particularly in light of Generation Y's increasing role in the federal workforce, government leaders have the responsibility to understand the nature of this evolution and embrace virtual networks as a way to be more efficient while remaining relevant.

“While the government is still buying Rolodexes, the younger generations have 600 friends on Facebook and 250 professional colleagues on LinkedIn,” said Steve Ressler, twenty-seven, a cofounder of Young Government Leaders, a professional organization of more than 1,000 younger federal employees from more than thirty departments and agencies. “It's very important for us to see Web 2.0 technologies in the workplace. We are used to working horizontal, are not afraid of authority, and want our ideas heard.”

Technology and Leadership

The cause of deploying Web 2.0 in government continues to gain committed champions, and the mounting success stories can be attributed more to leadership than technology. In April 2006, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) created the classified “Intellipedia” wiki site to allow sixteen intelligence agencies to quickly and collaboratively share classified information. Without compromising security, the goal was to transcend traditional silos and gain the agility required to combat loosely connected networks of terrorists and similarly diffuse but urgent threats. The site

Frank DiGiammarino serves as vice president for strategic initiatives and business development at the National Academy of Public Administration in Washington, DC. Lena Trudeau is program area director for strategic initiatives at the National Academy. They jointly lead The Collaboration Project, an independent leadership forum that uses research, best practices, and other resources to help apply the benefits of Web 2.0 and collaborative technology to government.

allows frontline agents to post information on any aspect of intelligence along with other agencies in the intelligence community.

This powerful collaborative tool has been put to practical use on several occasions, including the 2006 crash of a small plane into a New York City high-rise. Within two hours, Intellipedia garnered more than eighty updates, enough to determine with confidence that the crash was not a terrorist act. Intellipedia has also been useful in providing up-to-date, peer-driven intelligence on North Korean missile tests, bomb-making by Iraqi insurgents, and instability in Nigeria. In testimony presented to Congress on September 10, 2007—six years after the terrorist attacks of September 11—Director of National Intelligence Admiral Michael McConnell lauded Intellipedia for enabling “experts from different disciplines to pool their knowledge, form virtual teams, and quickly make complete intelligence assessments. . . . The solution does not require special networks or equipment but has dramatically changed our capability to share information in a timely manner.”

“It’s not complicated technology; it’s not expensive,” says Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Kip Hawley. “The biggest challenge, the biggest learning, is that somebody has to make the decision to just go ahead and do it.”

In addition to TSA’s classified involvement with Intellipedia, Hawley has overseen the launch of a new blog for the traveling public and an internal IdeaFactory, where TSA’s forty-three thousand frontline transportation security officers can confer collectively on job-related issues and ideas. The site empowers employees to share ideas on how to improve the organization across multiple lines; these ideas are available for every employee to see and evaluate. Employees vote for the ideas they like and offer constructive criticism. Within a week of its launch, TSA employees had submitted more than 150 ideas, offered more than 650 comments, and voted on ideas more than 800 times.

The Collaboration Project

Hawley recently discussed these initiatives at the first meeting of The Collaboration Project (see box), the National Academy of Public Administration’s newly launched leadership forum that uses research, best practices, and other resources to help apply the benefits of Web 2.0 and collaborative technology in government.

The Collaboration Project

The National Academy is taking the lead on Web 2.0 in government by launching The Collaboration Project—an independent leadership forum to jump-start the cause of collaborative technology to drive innovation and change in government. Designed for leaders looking to overcome the technical, organizational, and cultural barriers involved, the project convenes members in person and through a virtual collaboration space to share best practices, case studies, white papers, and leadership tools for implementation.

“This is a big idea that’s being introduced to a somewhat alien culture,” said National Academy president and chief executive officer Jenna L. Dorn, “but we are convinced that collaborative technology has the potential to transform government in America, to tap into the expertise of people outside the hierarchy of any single agency or department, to make government more transparent, and to open the door to a broader array of experts focused on solving a particular problem or to citizens who want to contribute to making government work better.”

The Collaboration Project kicked off operations with its first in-person meeting in February, drawing a diverse group of key decision makers, including congressional staff, chief information officers (CIOs), chief technology officers, chief financial officers, and other senior leaders from more than a dozen federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Coast Guard, Government Accountability Office, Small Business Administration, and Departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, and Defense.

TSA’s Kip Hawley inspired meeting participants with his presentation on the successful Web 2.0 advances at his agency. “It’s self-policing,” Hawley told the audience, explaining how the various parties collaborate in responsible and inventive ways without the need for excessive oversight by forum monitors. “We’ve found that the lighter the touch on editing, the better the quality of ideas and the quality of the discussion.”

Other kickoff event highlights included the informal networking breaks and enthusiastic audience participation during a facilitated brainstorming session.

More information on The Collaboration Project, including audio highlights of Kip Hawley’s presentation, is available at www.CollaborationProject.org.

The National Academy seeks founding members with the inspiration, vision, and commitment to join us in moving this important initiative forward.

Virtual Networks

Although they hold much promise and become more widely used by the day, virtual networks are still in an early stage of development. Individuals are constantly finding new ways to connect with communities, jointly recast their thinking, and develop amazing solutions to complex problems. The National Academy has a few observations:

- The virtual network is not *going* to happen: it *is* happening—and it should not be stopped, but celebrated. It may be one of the best levers available to public administrators as they try to achieve the agility needed to deliver for citizens in these difficult times.
- The virtual network does not replace the physical, but it does have the potential to connect many points within numerous networks. A leader must understand all networks and how to best leverage the virtual network to solve a specific challenge. The various networks depicted by two professors at the University of Arizona, H. Brinton Milward and Keith G. Provan, reveal how a virtual network can tie multiple networks together.
- Virtual networks should be originated to solve a specific challenge. The reward of solving that challenge must exceed the effort of engaging in the virtual network. If not, people will not participate.
- The rules that apply to physical networks should be considered when looking at a virtual network. In this regard, leaders can apply the work of National Academy fellow Edward DeSeve, who suggests in a recent article, “Creating Managed Networks as a Response to Societal Challenges,” that leaders looking at networks consider the following:
 - » Commitment to achieving results
 - » Trust in the information and the efforts of those in the network
 - » Governance on rules, membership, and security
 - » Access to authority as well as financial, technical, and human resources
 - » Leadership to shape and provide guidance to the network
 - » Distributive accountability promoting shared responsibility for results
 - » Information sharing and privacy protection.

Another Collaboration Project participant, EPA assistant administrator for the Office of Environmental Information and CIO Molly O’Neill, points to a successful project incorporating a variety of information sources into an online “mashup” for a Puget Sound cleanup effort in the Pacific Northwest.

“After thirty-six hours, we actually had more than seventeen thousand page views on the wiki and we had 178 quality, unique contributions,” said O’Neill, citing submissions from individuals at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of the Interior, environmental scientists, librarians, and a host of others with information and insights to add. “It was fascinating to see all the information that we were able to put together in a short amount of time, and to me, that was demonstrating success.”

EPA is a founding member of The Collaboration Project and shares its emphasis on the need to view technology solutions in the context of the business challenge at hand. Successful collaboration requires tight integration of information technology functions into the normal business of an organization, as it often requires fundamental changes in business processes and in culture.

Those responsible for technology must have a seat at the policy table, says Jennifer L. Dorn. “They must know all about your business—your business model and the problems you wrestle with every day—to be more proactive, because we are asking our technology experts to help us find solutions to problems we don’t even know we have.”

Although collaborative technologies are rarely expensive and comparatively easy to implement, *effective* deployment requires that they be evaluated, acquired, and set up with a deliberate eye toward the issues to be addressed in the virtual network (see box). Because collaborative technologies are a highly flexible medium—many wikis begin as nothing but a white space waiting to be populated by content—they tend to operate on the principle that form follows function. Those responsible for determining the form of collaborative solutions must have an intimate knowledge of the function they will serve.

Navigating the Stakeholder Network

Public administrators are breaking new ground to address the complexities of delivering services to citizens. For several years, the National Academy has been focused on the shift of the U.S. government to a multi-

sector workforce. With a federal workforce of 2 million civil servants managing a contractor workforce of nearly 10.5 million, we are already working in a network. The game has already changed, and public-sector leaders are now faced with the task of writing—or discovering—the new rules.

Thought leaders like William Eggers and Stephen Goldsmith, National Academy fellows and authors of the Brookings Institution book, *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector*, examine incorporating the concept of networks into the public sphere, transitioning from centralized control over public programs to facilitating services through an array of nongovernmental entities. This new model is characterized by the web of relationships and partnerships that increasingly defines modern governance.

Milward and Provan have begun to write about three forms of network governance: self-governing networks, lead organization networks, and network administrative organizations. Each of these models has significant implications for government's ability to deliver for the citizen.

In an environment where agility increasingly defines successful mission delivery, leaders in government are looking to the virtual network to connect horizontally and vertically with people and information. The technology is widely accessible, economical, and easy to use, and leaders are discovering that these networks offer opportunities to collect and efficiently analyze unprecedented volumes of information, gain enhanced buy-in for organizational goals and policies, and engage new audiences to produce original solutions to complex problems.

Particularly in light of the insular culture that pervades segments of government, building consensus and buy-in for virtual networks is a critical task. Franz Johansson's book, *The Medici Effect*, emphasizes the importance of including multiple stakeholders from varying fields, disciplines, and cultures to create extraordinary ideas. With the complexity of our challenges and opportunities, government leaders have the responsibility to understand the value of this type of network and tap into it.

After looking at the volume of activity across the country in virtual networks, we have identified four models (Figure 1). The models are built around leaders who are looking to engage managers, frontline workers, outside stakeholder groups, and citizens to drive specific outcomes for their organizations.

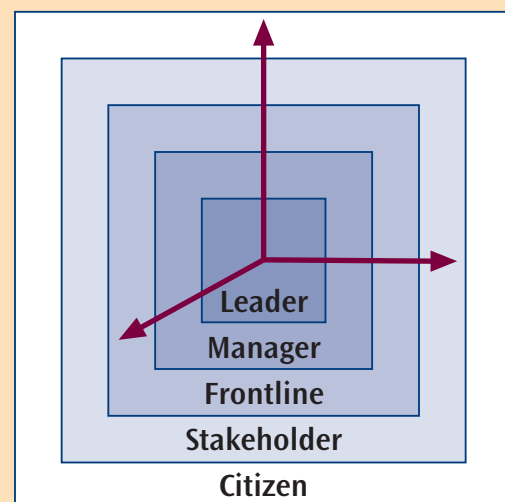
Leader to Frontline Workforce

Leaders and managers are reaching down to the frontline of their organizations to connect with and gain insights from the staff on the ground that delivers for the citizen. Intellipedia and the TSA IdeaFactory are examples of agencies that are pushing connectivity to the frontline to drive innovation.

Leader to Stakeholders

Organizations outside government provide the resources and support needed to solve many of government's toughest challenges. Virtual collaboration enhances the ability of communities with shared missions to work together for a common purpose. For example, the Great Lakes wiki—a site that houses stories, information, and resources pertaining to the Great Lakes—relies on the experience and knowledge of a network of citizens, including scientists, hunters, U.S. and Canadian policymakers and agency officials, environmentalists, anglers, lakeside property owners, boaters, business operators, and others who care about the Great Lakes region. The site allows private and nonprofit organizations to collaborate online with government leaders on projects such as the Rouge River revitalization efforts, which led Scott Moore, the Mayor of Birmingham, Michigan, to support improved water quality measures for the Rouge River.

Figure 1. Stakeholder Network



Leader to Citizen

Collaborative technology offers the promise of directly connecting citizens to their government—almost a nostalgic return to the public square and front porches of America. Rather than pushing citizens out of government, collaborative technologies allow us to invite them in.

Utah's Politicopia has joined a small but growing number of state and local wikis that emphasize improving people's ability to understand and control their government through citizen engagement in the political process. These Web sites improve citizen access to information by presenting open-source and wiki-based forums for the compilation and presentation of information on bills pending before the legislature, a brief summary of the issue and the bill's status, an invitation for arguments and comments, and links to relevant sources. Similar efforts are beginning in Indiana, Montana, Connecticut, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. Two municipal examples are Birmingham's Bhamwiki in Alabama and Rochester's RocWiki in New York.

Through a pilot project with the New York Law School, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is also finding innovative ways to apply a leader-to-citizen virtual network. Born from the thousand-case backlog and high percentage of patent approvals (85 percent) with limited review time (an average of eighteen hours per case), the "Peer-To-Patent" project allows for third-party comments and "voting" to expedite the review and approval process. By tapping expertise that lies beyond the walls of USPTO—resources that would have formerly been inaccessible—these leaders are improving the timeliness and quality of patents issued.

Peer to Peer

Across government, communities of practice are establishing wiki sites, blogs, and discussion boards to promote information sharing within their respective fields. One leader in the federal government recently mentioned that she belongs to thirty-two of these virtual communities at last count.

Technology is a crucial lever, but the challenge is ultimately one of governance and management.

One example is the interagency Semantic Interoperability Community of Practice (SICoP), which works, via a wiki site, toward the interoperability of software packages within the federal government and provides findings and recommendations to the Best Practices Committee of the federal CIO Council.

Another peer-to-peer application comes from the CIO Council's Architecture and Infrastructure Committee, which uses a wiki to revise its Federal Enterprise Architecture Data Reference Model. The wiki format allows participants to post and cross-index documents,

as well as have online discussions. Since the wiki requires very little formal training, participation is easy and working-level documents are not difficult to create. The result is that it compresses what was a cumbersome interagency process down to a quick 180 days.

One of the more dramatic examples of a citizen-driven network emerged from the tsunami that hit the coasts of south and east Asia in 2004. Virtual collaboration tools such as blogs, wiki sites, and discussion boards served as effective vehicles for response efforts, providing news agencies covering the disaster with a critical resource and helping to organize citizen-led aid efforts. This virtual community allowed citizens to create an organic, self-organized network that provided critical information to—and contact with—the mainstream media and government-led responses.

This model, in particular, emphasizes the interconnectivity and complexity of the networks. The key to success is recognizing that being in control is less important than having linkages to the ideas and data that will help get the job done.

Meeting Challenges with Agility

As ODNI learned with Intellipedia, virtual networks can bring new levels of flexibility and responsiveness to achieve mission-critical priorities. But technology simply brings the latest answer to a centuries-old challenge: how can government remain as agile as the threat (particularly in times of war)?

The United States has been at both ends of the question. During the Revolutionary War, well-armed, brightly outfitted British forces marching in lockstep were confounded by American fighters whose strength lay in their ability to blend into the environment and improvise formations on the battlefield. In World War II, the Allied forces had smart soldiers on the ground with specific objectives that didn't require constant command updates. Meanwhile, especially toward the end of the war, the Germans' reliance on a calcified and nonresponsive command-and-control structure proved fatal. Today, our government is grappling with the uncomfortable reality that, when it comes to agility in facing an opponent, we are at a disadvantage.

Fortunately, leaders across government are stepping up to meet this challenge. Technology is a crucial lever, but the challenge is ultimately one of governance and management. The virtual network is an opportunity for

government managers—who are asked to do more with less every day—to best serve the citizens of our country.

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Interagency Network of Enterprise Assistance Providers



An unusual partnership of government agencies and private businesses communicate and collaborate to enhance services to small business.

by Carroll Thomas

Less than ten years ago, twenty million small businesses across America faced the catastrophic year 2000 crisis! Y2K, as it was called, threatened computers around the world because they were based on a DD/MM/YY formula. This formula made computers believe that the year 2000 was actually the year 1900, rendering them unable to correctly calculate any information dealing with time.

Enter a fairly young public-private program—the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), headquartered at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)—which focuses on assisting small manufacturers around the country. Through collaboration, MEP was able to broker a deal with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration (SBA) Small Business Development Centers. Working together, they leveraged their reach and resources to small businesses across America and helped them avert the crisis. The successful collaboration helped millions of small businesses survive, but soon thereafter the synergistic collaborative efforts between the organizations ceased.

The looming Y2K catastrophe spurred the federal agencies that serve medium and small businesses to work together, but in today's interconnected world such collaboration needs to be routine and continuous. In January 2006, this need led to the formation of a more formal public-private network, the Interagency Network of Enterprise Assistance Providers (INEAP).

Goals and Membership

INEAP is a coalition of people from federal (and some private and nonprofit) organizations whose primary mission is to assist small businesses. It has three major goals:

1. Establish and maintain positive relationships among the people who run these programs.
2. Use those relationships to learn about the various programs—what they offer, whom they serve, and what if any collaborative relationships they currently have with related programs.
3. Use that knowledge to find opportunities to collaborate and improve services to small businesses.

INEAP members come from forty-five business and technical assistance programs, including the SBA; Export-Import Bank; U.S. Departments of Commerce (DOC), Labor (DOL), and Energy (DOE); and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), and other nonprofit organizations are also involved.

INEAP's stakeholders are other federal, state, and private providers that offer services to or have a network with small and medium-size businesses. Congress is also a customer and stakeholder.

Functions

Fifteen to forty INEAP members, depending on the agenda, meet monthly. The meetings typically help members learn about other programs' offerings. Each meeting focuses on a theme: support to veteran-owned businesses, international trade and financing, loan programs to businesses, and the like. Between meetings, various INEAP members forge the formal and informal partnerships that actually accomplish the network's goals.

INEAP has no senior sponsor, no formal charter, and no official mandate. It operates with a few ground rules (such as respect members and each other's programs and commit to sharing program information), but compared with some partnerships, it functions in a very informal manner. Members prefer it that way because the low profile keeps bureaucracy to a minimum.

Carroll Thomas is partnership catalyst, MEP, NIST, DOC. She can be reached at carroll.thomas@nist.gov. Other members of INEAP mentioned in this article include Antonio Doss, SBA, Antonio.doss@sba.gov, and David Widawsky, EPA, Widawsky.david@epa.gov.

Antonio Doss, the director of SBA's Small Business Development Centers, and Carroll Thomas, partnership catalyst for MEP and author of this article, founded this interagency group and facilitate the monthly meetings. We recently established an executive core council of the most active INEAP members, which shares the leadership tasks. Meetings rotate among the members' downtown offices. When resources (people, meeting rooms, and the like) are needed, the leaders ask members to contribute them.

High technology has not played a major role in the network's operation, but INEAP *does* make occasional use of the Web, and its Web site—www.ineap.nist.gov/ineap/—has an external and internal component. The internal area is for members to share information—on topics such as business disaster preparedness, computer recycling programs, and energy efficiency—with other members and their clients. INEAP also plans to offer a series of Webcasts on assistance programs for the tax-paying business owners its organizations serve.

The major communication tool INEAP members use is an old-fashioned one—meeting and talking directly with each other to exchange information and find common purpose.

A Meeting

On September 26, 2007, fifteen INEAP members and visitors gathered at DOE in Washington, DC, for the monthly meeting, one that had a particular sense of energy and enthusiasm. Participants were from DOL, DOE, DOC, four EPA program offices, and the AACC.

Members' presentations took up much of the time, but this meeting differed in the connection and synergy apparent in the room. One member discussed a partnership among several agencies and private-sector groups to reduce energy usage by 25 percent over the next decade, and its plan to post its methods, tools, and progress on a Web to share them with other companies. That got the attention of an EPA representative, who wanted to know more about the partnership and how the members were working together. That member then mentioned a consortium of college presidents who are meeting to find ways to reduce energy consumption on their campuses, which prompted someone else to talk about an upcoming conference on best practices in energy usage and lean methods within government agencies.

David Widawsky, Associate Director for Policy Innovation at EPA's National Center for Policy Innovation (one of the original INEAP members), says,

“I feel fortunate and blessed to be at INEAP meetings. They stimulate many creative ideas and opportunities. ... At most business meetings, we start with a problem or desired outcome, and try to figure out how to get there. That's a smart way to go, but it doesn't necessarily lead to creative thinking. At INEAP meetings we have a presentation as the starting point. Someone talks about their program. That leads to questions and discussion, then some exploration to see where there might be opportunities for collaboration. That's where the light bulbs start coming on! These kinds of discussions lead to lots of new ideas, we gain knowledge about programs that could affect our clients, and sometimes we start new partnerships as a result of what we learned and who we met. INEAP gives us a license to think laterally.”

Examples

Green Suppliers Network

Before INEAP, MEP and EPA established the Green Suppliers Network (GSN), a collaboration between government and industry that focuses on the dual challenge of reducing the environmental impact of small and mid-size manufacturing suppliers and increasing the companies' efficiency, productivity, and profitability. GSN employs “lean” and “clean” methods, which concentrate on the root causes of waste in a facility and provide a framework for achieving specific measurable environmental and business objectives. GSN helps companies in three areas: lean processes, reduced energy consumption, and reduced impact on the environment.

In Missouri, MEP had been working with EPA to identify companies interested in GSN reviews. At the same time, it was working with the local DOE industrial assessment center to identify and assist companies interested in energy assessments. And it was providing lean assessments to identify waste in processes and materials. The problem was that all three of these activities were happening separately.

Jimmy Story, business program manager of the Missouri MEP, was looking for ways to offer the GSN package of three assessments as one package that made sense to the manufacturers. At an INEAP meeting in Washington, MEP and EPA program managers discussed the need to bring the three GSN elements together and learned that Jimmy Story was looking for the same thing at the field level. Tara O'Hare, INEAP member from

EPA, contacted him and offered to help. That's when things started to take off, as Story says,

“With Tara's help, we were able to bring the elements together. She gave us a road map based on other states' experience in using GSN, so I didn't have to reinvent the wheel. She also initiated monthly conference calls with my MEP colleagues, so we could compare notes and learn from each other. And she educated the University of Missouri's Extension Service on how the GSN elements work together. It's made a huge difference.”

Through INEAP connections, Jimmy Story was able to get encouragement from several government program managers. He also received additional assessments from DOE (which provides them at no charge to companies) and learned how to seek additional funding from EPA to help defray the cost of environmental assessments.

The biggest winners of all are the fifteen manufacturers that are current Missouri MEP clients. Getting lean, clean, and energy efficient helped them to become more profitable and save on the cost of the assessments. Having the assessments rolled into one also cut the downtime of going through each assessment separately. Most important, integrating the assessments helped them save energy and improve the air quality of the plant. For more on GSN, go to www.greensuppliers.gov/gsn/home.gsn.

Local INEAPs

Learning about other programs available for the same clients inspires the national INEAP members to encourage collaboration at the local level. For instance, the MEP in Colorado heard about INEAP from program-level members. Colorado MEP staff members started to work together and realized that they would be more efficient using staff members trained in all the programs to offer seamless counseling to the small companies they serve in their state. The MEP contacted Colorado's Economic Development Office about developing a local INEAP or “L-INEAP.” It was encouraged to seek funding and has put in a proposal for specialized training for a small staff that would represent the various technical and business assistance programs available in Colorado.

For the Colorado MEP and other technical assistance programs, having staff members collocated would cut down on administrative costs. Moreover, it would help businesses take advantage of all the assistance avail-

able to them, in an integrated way. For instance, a small manufacturer could

- ◆ set up an appointment to have the local Small Business Development Center help with financing issues,
- ◆ learn how the Colorado MEP could help implement Lean Six Sigma to become more efficient, and
- ◆ get assistance in learning how to market products to the Department of Defense from the local procurement technical assistance center.

Problems and Solutions

Leading a diverse, large, and informal network is no easy task, and several issues have emerged. A contractor learning about INEAP warned that partnerships usually face three big challenges: cash, credit, and control. INEAP and its leaders are aware of these issues—and more—and have worked hard to address them. The subsections that follow describe the strategies they've used.

Cash

Joining INEAP requires no financial commitment. Thus far, most expenses have been in kind, handled by NIST MEP and the programs hosting the monthly meetings, but INEAP's high activity is demanding greater resources and soon will require more than the contributions received from member agencies. On the other hand, the fact that agencies and offices can join INEAP at no cost has been one of its success factors: joining the partnership has no drawbacks, not always the case with collaboration. The need is for more than funding: often the most important resource needed is time to handle the various INEAP administrative tasks. The new executive core council is starting to meet that need, developing policies and procedures that will help to evenly distribute these tasks.

Credit

Because INEAP has been so active, it has many results to report, but which member organizations should be recognized when it puts out a press release? Some don't want to be mentioned in the media because their involvement in INEAP is politically sensitive at the local level, and they need to keep a low profile. Starting small and building slowly has allowed for minor achievements that have been able to navigate the credit issue and helped to clarify goals that also define credit sensitivities.

Ownership and Control

Given its early success and rapid growth, many people want to own INEAP and pursue their own agenda. That, of course, is a mixed blessing. Dealing with varying agendas is a challenge, but it can also be positive if it means that people value the partnership and develop a stake in it. Also, some private-sector groups think it is too federally oriented and that more private associations should be represented.

Rotating INEAP meetings has enabled members to contribute resources as needed, encouraged shared responsibility for meeting agendas, and contributed to a strong ethic of shared control.

Trust

Trust is a prominent issue for many collaborative initiatives. Transparency was practiced by INEAP's founders at the outset, largely by modeling an open communications style. For instance, they informed the members of their budget histories for supporting small businesses and encouraged others to do the same (many did). They openly discussed some of the problems they were having in their own operations with the field offices of some INEAP members, which encouraged others to engage in the same way. The members who joined INEAP in early 2006 quickly picked up on this openness, and it has created a high level of trust as new people join.

Trust is a function of consistency. As new members join, they are exposed to an atmosphere of trust and openness that excites them. When they experience that atmosphere meeting after meeting, they see that it's genuine and contribute to the openness and trust. At a recent executive core council meeting, Stephen Covey's new book *The Speed of Trust* was given to each member by one of the founders to demonstrate the importance of trust.

Finding Time

Supporting and leading the partnership takes an enormous amount of time, due, in part, to the large number of established relationships. The leaders know investing time is key in relationship-building efforts and communicating these relationships. This groundwork allows the members to contact someone with whom they have an established relationship, cutting through the normal red tape of government-structured stovepipes.

In addition, each meeting requires preparation to pick appropriate themes and involves time-consuming follow-up afterward. “All INEAP members do this work on their own time,” Doss notes. “Nobody’s boss directs the members to participate.” That’s testimony to the partnership’s attractiveness. It’s also a risk: if the members’ managers have no stake in INEAP, they may not approve of the amount of time their subordinates put into the partnership. Happily, every INEAP member’s supervisor has seen the value of this partnership and has supported the investment of time.

Maintaining Continuity

Two people perform much of the INEAP work. “Carroll is really the glue that keeps everything together,” Doss says. “I do a lot, but she’s critical to our success. So we need to develop an infrastructure to keep things moving if she (or I) can’t continue contributing at this level.” The recently created council will not only expand the number of people who feel ownership of the group, but will encourage succession planning for de-

veloping a new generation of leaders to assume some of the workload and continue efforts into the future.

Conclusion

Jean Monnet, an early champion of the European Union, once said, “Rien n’est possible sans les hommes, rien n’est durable sans les institutions” (“Nothing is possible without men; nothing is lasting without institutions.”) His point is that any initiative, no matter how large or small, inevitably relies on a few key individuals to get started. After these early champions demonstrate the effort’s potential and achieve early success, they must build structures and institutions that outlast the individual. INEAP leaders well understand Monnet’s comment and are moving to create more structure and shared leadership for INEAP. They also understand that the early champions of an initiative are far more likely to succeed if they forge strong relationships, because without them and the trust they engender, there will be no successes to publicize.



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Citizen Engagement in Gallatin County

by Earl Mathers

A county government in Montana uses communication techniques to democratize the decision-making process without impeding it.

The population of Gallatin County, Montana, has grown about 3 percent annually for a number of years, leading Montana through most of the last decade. Growth brings challenges to local government, but in this case, the accompanying cultural change and conflicting viewpoints pose dilemmas unheard of a decade ago. Traditionally, agricultural production worked in tandem with Montana State University (MSU) to power Gallatin County's economy. Although MSU, which focuses on agriculture and engineering, continues to be the area's largest employer, farming and ranching are threatened by the encroachment of major subdivisions and their ever-increasing demand for land and water.

New residents often have different perspectives than natives concerning the environment and quality-of-life issues. Moreover, many of the new residents are interested in influencing policy and are not reticent in sharing their opinions. To serve a more diverse array of interests, a broader range of businesses has been established in Bozeman, the county's largest municipality and county seat. In reaction, clever traditionalists outside Bozeman have recently coined the somewhat disparaging term "Bozangeles" in reference to the city. They lament the fact that new residents fail to understand that a certain "code of the west" still prevails in many parts of the region. Although ethnic diversity in Gallatin County is changing only gradually, different groups have distinct attitudes.

Geography plays a role in a county that is nearly 120 miles long and has a number of distinct commercial and cultural zones as well as five in-

corporated municipalities. Socioeconomic status is another important factor that influences opinion, along with variations in lifestyle, educational levels, and political affiliation. Gallatin County's eighty-three thousand residents include a diverse mix of wealthy celebrities, genuine cowboys, ski bums, academics, farmers, cutting-edge entrepreneurs, working people, and a few indigent homeless folks. Overall, 40 percent of the area's residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and this well-educated populace tends to be well informed on a variety of issues. Values are in conflict in Gallatin County, and the challenge for local government is to devise and implement mechanisms that allow for vibrant public discourse without bringing the decision-making process to a standstill. This article explores several approaches used in Gallatin County to engage the public in a manner that efficiently informs the decision-making process.

Setting and Conditions

Bordering Yellowstone National Park and boasting three major ski areas along with abundant wildlife and virtually unrivaled outdoor recreation, Gallatin County is an attractive place to live and work as well as to retire. Technology has also enabled a growing number of new residents to reside in the county and manage their business activities remotely. In many cases, these entrepreneurs, along with retirees that have relocated to the area, possess financial resources beyond those of most long-term residents. Consequently, strong demand has pushed the price of housing to 122 percent of the national average. Workers are in short supply, and competition among employers has elevated wages, particularly for entry-level employees.

Nonetheless, many people, including local government employees, struggle with the cost of living, particularly in Bozeman. Local governments are attempting to respond to increasing citizen demands and the need to build capacity with limited resources. These challenges notwithstanding, population growth continues and most residents stay for the quality of life—which is superb in terms of natural beauty, access to outdoor recreation, minimal congestion, and low crime rates.

Earl Mathers, current Gallatin County administrator, has served as an executive with the Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and in various capacities as a manager, long-term advisor, and consultant to local governments domestically and internationally. His international experience includes long-term postings in Lithuania and Romania as well as numerous short-term assignments in Eastern Europe/Newly Independent States, Africa, and the Middle East. He can be reached at Earl.Mathers@gallatin.mt.gov.

The Trichotomy

If representative democracy was characterized by the politics-administration dichotomy, then deliberative democracy, in its many forms, must be a politics-administration-citizen involvement “trichotomy.” Those of us working in local government today understand that dispensing with citizen involvement would be inconceivable except in rare instances in which marshal law is invoked. However, engaging citizens in the deliberative process is clearly difficult at times and does not necessarily promote efficiency in decision making. Politicians and administrators continue to have different perspectives that are further complicated by divergent public opinions on the same sets of issues. Undoubtedly, citizens and interest groups have always had conflicting points of view, but the difference today is that local government works systematically to engage people in the deliberative process. Public expectations are higher as well. The demand for accountability, sometimes through performance measurement, is growing, and people become vocal when their local officials are unresponsive. While the expectation of responsiveness on the part of elected officials has been the norm in Gallatin County for many years, demands for staff accountability have clearly increased.

Appointed and elected officials in Gallatin County share a common desire to involve the public in the decision-making process. Although filling vacancies on boards is at times difficult, Gallatin County has many highly committed and energized volunteers. Involvement in some community organizations has declined, but it has been stable overall, despite the fact that membership probably has not kept pace with population growth. Other measures of involvement, such as voter turnout, tend to exceed national averages, and voters have been supportive, albeit selectively, of bond initiatives. Perhaps the most notable exception to voter support for infrastructure development has been the failure of two jail initiatives. Various theories try to account for the cause of this failure, but the reasons include fragmented support and poor communication with the electorate. In general, social capital is in comparatively good supply in Gallatin County. However, democracy is “in flux.” Thus, the challenge is to facilitate networks that are capable of both informing decision making and identifying community resources to augment increasingly inadequate tax revenues.

For a number of reasons, growth is an issue that elicits a strong reaction in Gallatin County. Its vast tracts of National Forest and wilderness areas as well as its border

with Yellowstone National Park make the county an area of ecological importance. Residents and visitors alike revere the area's natural attributes, and suburban sprawl is seen as a growing menace by many people. Gallatin County leads Montana in tourism, and visitors take advantage of its recreational opportunities year round. Although few residents would seek to diminish the quality of the environment, developers, landowners, and the county's robust real-estate community do have vested interests in residential and commercial growth.

Policymakers are confronted with the conundrum of balancing a traditional approach to land-use planning with the emerging need to apply contemporary planning techniques to encourage investment in infrastructure, protect the environment, and discourage sprawl. In the past, land-use practices have been relatively free of regulation. Today, countywide zoning is being contemplated, and achieving concurrency between residential, commercial, and infrastructure development is well beyond Gallatin County's financial wherewithal. Keeping up with road improvements driven by increases in average trips per day has been a tremendous challenge. Overcoming the problems associated with water and wastewater is a challenge that has yet to be fully confronted. Meeting this and other infrastructure demands will certainly require innovative thinking and strong public support.

Citizen Involvement Techniques

Gallatin County has involved citizens in a variety of ways for many years. Over time, however, the issues have become more complex and the public more divided concerning expected outcomes. Citizen advisory boards dealing with a diverse range of services—including capital improvements, open lands, emergency communications and dispatch, transportation, solid waste, and land-use planning—have long assisted decision makers. In addition to these standing boards, ad hoc committees convene to inform decision making concerning activities such as the planning and development of a new detention facility and strategic community planning. The following subsections detail public participation techniques used by Gallatin County.

Growth Policy Forums

Gallatin County regularly uses community forums. In 2007, the county held a series of forums to solicit opinions concerning growth policy, a process that continues at this writing. Growth policy is an assortment of

emotionally charged issues in which many people have vested interests and opinions that diverge along lines that aren't fully predictable. The elements of growth policy that are most controversial include the assessment of impact fees, potential implementation of transferable development rights, density restrictions, rural clustering, concurrency, fire standards, and environmental impact of new development. At present, much of the ongoing debate centers on whether growth should continue to be managed through the subdivision review process, as it has in the past, or whether countywide zoning is necessary. County planners teamed with the county commissioners to hold eighteen community forums in different county locations to share information and collect public input. Also, planners distributed a questionnaire and recorded public comments.

Although acquiring a better understanding of public sentiment concerning growth strategies was the motivation behind the forums, they reaped other benefits. Bringing both staff members and county commissioners closer to the public stimulated increased involvement and prodded residents to comment on an even broader range of policy issues. The process also encouraged the formation of networks within the various subregions of Gallatin County, leading to the subsequent formation of the community planning groups described below. The forums were well attended and created opportunities for the exchange of differing viewpoints in an open and nonthreatening setting. Moreover, county planners were able to share technical information regarding options that otherwise would be difficult to disseminate.

Community Planning Process

Beyond Gallatin County's five incorporated municipalities lie a number of smaller communities, some heavily impacted by growth. Lacking in organizational infrastructure, these areas need assistance in meeting emerging growth challenges. To this end, county planners, in response to requests for assistance, have instituted citizen-driven community planning in three county locations. The process involves three basic components—collecting and analyzing information, engaging the public, and preparing implementation plans to support intelligent growth:

- ◆ The information component involves the creation of a demographic profile, public facility inventory, land-use inventory, and landscape/environmental inventory.

- ◆ Although the level of public participation varies, it has been high for the most part, and citizens are committed to seeing the process through. The county encourages and augments direct citizen involvement by disseminating information through press releases, flyers, expert presenters, and phone trees to notify people of upcoming meetings.
- ◆ The implementation phase is expected to culminate in the formation of a neighborhood plan that distills the information collected during the preliminary stages in the context of good community planning. The neighborhood plan will form the basis for planning policies, possibly including customized subdivision regulations, development standards, or community-based zoning.

Recently, members of the agricultural community involved in community planning have expressed an interest in participating in planning sessions that focus exclusively on farm and ranch concerns. Although the opportunity to explore agricultural issues in greater depth is welcome, the inherent danger is that such splinter groups will diverge completely from their suburban community neighbors. Mindful of this potential for the creation of competing agendas, planners will attempt to maintain some degree of ongoing integration between the groups and identify points of commonality.

Open Lands Program

In 1997, the county set up a citizen task force to consider the feasibility of establishing an open lands program. The resulting program was expected to provide a means for members of the agricultural community to permanently preserve tracts of land as a means of providing open space in the Gallatin Valley in perpetuity. Although certain quarters initially resisted the program, the idea gained traction and the program began buying easements in 2000. The program purchased easements for a fraction of the assessed value of the parcel, and public access is generally possible and farming and ranching activities continue as well. Development on the property is severely restricted, however. To date, more than five hundred thousand acres have been protected through twenty-two easements. The value of these properties exceeds \$100 million, although the easements were purchased for approximately \$11 million. In many cases, the program obtained improved access to important recre-

ational areas while protecting riparian areas and conserving wildlife migration corridors.

Although the county commissioners must give final approval for easement purchases, the process is almost entirely citizen-driven. (The first conservation easement in Gallatin County was created on ranch property owned by the family of one of Gallatin County's current commissioners, before his election to office.) The county provides support through the open lands coordinator and the assistant to the county administrator. The original task force evolved into an Open Lands Board, which works closely with the Gallatin Valley Land Trust and other community organizations. Volunteer board members closely scrutinize every proposed easement and generally participate in tours of proposed properties with the coordinator. Property value is assessed and board members evaluate the property in terms of its inherent value as an added piece of Gallatin County's open lands legacy.

Capital Improvement Program Committee

Established in 1998, the Capital Improvement Program Committee (CIPC) fulfills a crucial role in advising the county commission, county administrator, and projects administrator. The CIPC focuses its efforts on the maintenance, remodeling, and construction of Gallatin County facilities. In practice, the senior staff has ongoing dialogue with the committee, which usually meets semimonthly. CIPC members are appointed by the county commissioners and selected from the community at large. Representatives from the real-estate and finance communities are teamed with elected and appointed officials from Gallatin County to consider both urgent facilities needs and those submitted in conformance with the budget cycle. Gallatin County manages approximately twenty buildings in eight major locations, and their physical condition varies considerably.

Major responsibilities of the CIPC include analyzing facilities condition inventory reports, reviewing the capital improvement requests submitted annually by department heads, considering urgent demands for major facility repairs, convening ad hoc committees to investigate the feasibility of major projects, and making funding recommendations to the county commissioners. In all of these activities, the project manager, finance officer, and county administrator work closely with the CIPC, and the office manager for the county commissioners supports the committee's efforts.

The CIPC prioritizes and proposes project funding. Ultimate approval for major requests resides with the county commission. The CIPC has worked to fine-tune the process of reviewing annual requests from departments, and these requests are prescreened by the space committee using a defined set of criteria. When the requests reach the CIPC, they are accompanied by staff input that includes evaluations concerning the seriousness of the problem to be addressed, availability of extra-budgetary resources, information on the number of people affected, health and safety issues mitigated, and so forth. The program developed a standard application, and departments are expected to provide a reasonable amount of information about the project, including a rough estimate of project cost.

The CIPC is considered highly effective by the staff and county commissioners. Since streamlining the application and review process, the CIPC has managed to perform its annual review work objectively and expediently. Moreover, it is able to depoliticize the process in a manner appreciated by all stakeholders. The county commissioners have not always followed CIPC recommendations, most notably concerning the choice of a site for a new detention center. Although this disagreement created some tension, a belief in the efficacy of the process remains, along with a commitment to continued engagement.

Evaluating Citizen Involvement

The process of democratic local governance in Gallatin County features meaningful citizen participation. Local officials value structured approaches that engage citizens because they believe that citizen input and sometimes citizen-driven initiatives are viable from a public policy perspective. Suggesting that ulterior motives—such as a desire to overcome opposition or placate vocal critics—have never been considered as beneficial outcomes of participation would be disingenuous. In most cases, however, more noble objectives prevail.

Good intentions and early successes notwithstanding, Gallatin County has not yet explored the full array of citizen engagement strategies that could benefit the public and local government. For example, performance management and pay-for-performance systems can be tied to citizen involvement. Involving the public provides opportunities to align citizen expectations with organizational goals that drive the creation of individual performance standards tied to pay for performance. Although the county has implemented a pay-for-

performance system, it is still working to promote better understanding and acceptance of the system among employees, and attempting to link the system with citizen expectations would be premature at this time.

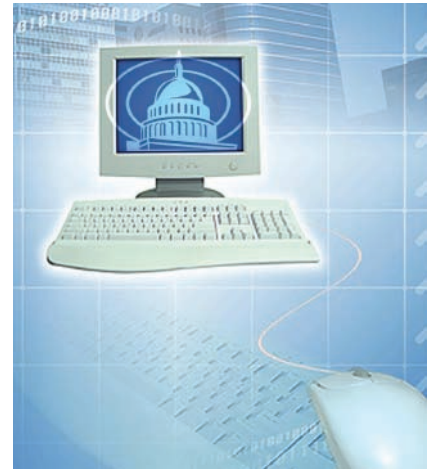
The county needs to train key staff members to serve as mediators with standing committees and in less formal situations. As stated previously, many of the issues that bring staff members and citizens together are contentious. Building consensus concerning land use and environmental planning, for example, is a vexing challenge, and staff members do a commendable job of facilitating the exchange of information. However, consensus that leads to a clear plan of action that acknowledges divergent opinions is often elusive. The willingness of standing committees to engage in strategic planning approaches such as environmental scanning has been scarcely tested in Gallatin County. Early resistance has arisen to more systematic efforts to clearly link citizen expectations with the goals of the committees that influence political decisions and administrative actions. Utilizing open processes would likely produce a more balanced set of goals in which the perspectives of all stakeholders were recognized. In some cases, the goals produced by certain groups are vague, poorly objectified, or so numerous as to be unmanageable.

Growth in Gallatin County has strained local government resources, and additional staff resources are needed to sustain effective citizen engagement in the governance process. Managing community planning forums requires about one-third of a full-time equivalent, and staffing the planning board is much more labor intensive, although the load is distributed among several staff members. The quality of the relationships between the county commission and various advisory boards continues to evolve as well. Establishing clear expectations and better communication may help to improve the quality of citizen deliberation, but this will require considerable, sustained effort.

Conclusion

Both the authenticity and effectiveness of citizen engagement will improve in Gallatin County in the future. With the encouragement of local government, communities of interest will continue to interact, creating new networks that draw upon their commitment to addressing specific growth management issues for cohesion and strength. This road is destined to be full of twists and bumps, but it is navigable, at least in four-wheel drive.

Improving Government Transparency Online



Citizen-engaging technology can make government data available online, easy to access, and understandable.

by Jerry Brito

Democracy is founded on the principle that the moral authority of government derives from the consent of the governed. That consent is not particularly meaningful, however, unless it is informed. When government makes decisions in secret, opportunity for corruption increases and government's accountability to the people decreases. This is why we strive for transparency in government. When official meetings are open to citizens and the press, when government finances are open to public scrutiny, and when laws and the procedures for making them are open to discussion, the actions of government enjoy greater legitimacy.

Recent years have seen a renewed effort to increase government transparency in the United States. In the wake of the Jack Abramoff, Duke Cunningham, and William Jefferson scandals, Congress moved once again to shed light on its own activities. Senators Barack Obama and Tom Coburn introduced legislation requiring the full disclosure of all organizations receiving federal funds through an online database operated by the Office of Management and Budget. The result was the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. House Democrats, led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, also pledged that after the 2006 congressional elections they would enact legislation to "restore accountability, honesty, and openness at all levels of government." The result was the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, which requires

that information about earmarks be published on a public, searchable Web site forty-eight hours before a vote can be taken on the bill containing the earmarks.

Disclosure Requirements

Unfortunately, many statutory requirements for disclosure do not take Internet technology into account. For example, the 1978 Ethics in Government Act requires the disclosure of financial information—including the source, type, and amount of income—by many federal employees, elected officials, and candidates for office, including the president, vice president, and members of Congress. The act further requires that all filings be available to the public. One might imagine, then, that every representative or senator's information would be just a Web search away, but one would be wrong.

Members of the House of Representatives must file their disclosures with the clerk of the House, while senators must do the same with the secretary of the Senate. Each of these offices maintains a searchable electronic database of the filings. However, to access these databases, citizens must go to Washington, DC, and visit those Capitol Hill offices during business hours. No other means are available for searching the databases, greatly impeding widespread dissemination of nominally publicly available information.

Even when public information is available online, it is often not available in an easily accessible form. If data are difficult to search for and find, the effect can be the same as if it were not online. Also, to allow users to exploit the full potential of the Internet—to subscribe to data streams, to mix and match data sources—data must be presented in a structured machine-readable format.

For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent government agency with an active regulatory agenda that it manages via its online docket system. In theory, users of the FCC Web site are able to see active rulemakings, search for and read FCC documents and public interest comments filed by interested parties, and file their own comments. In practice, the site seems to be an exercise in obscurantism.

The dockets containing proposed rules and other official FCC documents, as well as public comments, are

available on the Web site through a search form, but each docket contains neither an index of open proceedings nor indexes of documents. To obtain a list of documents in a given docket, the seeker must know the docket's number and search using that number. The resulting list is presented in chronological order with no way to sort by author, document length, or any other field.

There is also no way of searching within dockets for specific keywords. Even if there were a function that allowed one to search within documents, the results would be incomplete because many documents are posted as image files that are not easily parsed by computers and would not be returned in a search. This situation applies both to comments submitted by the public and FCC documents. This is the case even though public comments are usually created in word processing applications, such as Microsoft Word, which produce machine-readable electronic documents.

Really Simple Syndication

The most common form of subscribable structured data is an RSS feed. RSS stands for “really simple syndication” and usually refers to a family of data formats that allows the automation and aggregation of data. For example, the *New York Times* offers an RSS feed for its homepage, as does the *Washington Post*. A user can subscribe to these feeds with a desktop application called a “feed reader” or a Web-based reader such as Google Reader. Anytime something is added to the homepage of the newspaper, it is simultaneously published in the newspaper's RSS feed. When subscribers turn on their feed reader, it checks all the subscribed feeds for new items, which are then displayed. So, with one simple feed reader application, a user can keep track of dozens or hundreds of feeds without having to regularly visit the Web sites of the publisher, in this case the newspapers.

Imagine being able to subscribe to feeds from government agencies and departments. You could subscribe to the FCC's RSS feed and then never visit the site again just to check whether new regulations have been proposed. If a new regulation (or other document) is added, your reader automatically alerts you—but it could be even more useful.

The *New York Times*, for example, offers a feed just for its automotive section. Subscribe and you are notified only when new articles about cars are published, and you never have to wade through all the other published content. The *Times* also offers feeds for its food section, its section on European news, and dozens more.

Jerry Brito is a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. This article is adapted from “Hack, Mash, and Peer: Crowdsourcing Government Transparency,” forthcoming from the Columbia Science and Technology Law Review in 2008. He can be reached at gbrito@gmu.edu.

There is no reason why the FCC could not similarly publish a feed for each of its bureaus. Once users are aware of a regulation they would like to track, why not allow them to “subscribe” to the regulation? A government Web site could allow them to subscribe to regulatory dockets and be notified of all official actions and public interest comments filed in a particular docket, such as wireless spectrum regulations or cable regulations.

The *New York Times* also offers a series of “Times Topics” Web pages and companion RSS feeds. These range from persons (Rupert Murdoch, Hillary Clinton) to countries (Sudan, Colombia) to organizations, general subjects, and issues (New York Yankees, U.S. Supreme Court, cancer). Subscriber feed readers display articles published relating to a particular keyword anywhere in the pages of the *Times*. Imagine if such keyword subscriptions were available from regulatory agencies. The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, could offer topic subscriptions such as “pesticides,” “Superfund,” or “Vermont,” making it easier for citizens to engage in the topics that matter to them.

Government Information Online

The government cannot predict every possibly useful topic, but readily available technology today allows for RSS subscriptions to keyword searches. Google News, for example, allows users to make a regular Web search and then subscribe to the results. Each time a new item using your search term appears anywhere on the Web, you are alerted.

Making government information available online would not only benefit individual users of government Web sites, it would also make it simpler for third parties to aggregate government data. By aggregating data, Web sites can present government information in innovative and useful ways. For example, federal spending data gathered from a government Web site could be presented by a third party as an interactive map that shows the locations of funding recipients. Such applications make data exponentially more valuable. Government need not develop such innovative tools itself; as long as the data are available online in a structured format, private parties can make good use of the information.

Structured Data

“Structured data,” as we have noted, is a term of art, meaning that information is presented in a format that allows computers to easily parse and manipulate it. Al-

though a static Web page that lists a series of news stories or proposed regulations is not structured, it may have a companion XML file containing the same information. A structured XML file would allow a user to sort the data by ascending or descending date, alphabetically by headline or author, by number of words, and in many other ways that a static Web page does not afford.

In 2007, a group of interested citizens collaboratively produced a report detailing how the House of Representatives could use Internet technology to better serve its constituents. In it they explained,

“The notion of structured data is not new to the federal government. The Census Bureau, for instance, has for years not only provided a Web interface for census statistics—that is, a page where users can find simple data such as population numbers—but also the complete set of numeric data files to be downloaded and imported into database and statistics programs. The benefit of a download of the data is that with the complete data set computers can help people delve more deeply into the data and put it in new forms, such as charts and maps, that would be too time consuming to create by hand. Another example is the Securities and Exchange Commission’s practice of making investment filings available to the public in XML format through its EDGAR program. Likewise, the Federal Election Commission makes campaign contribution information available in a downloadable structured data format, allowing the public to absorb the information in a variety of ways.”

Mashups

When the government makes data available in a structured format, it opens the doors to innovative and enlightening remixes of information known as mashups. Mashups are tools that can potentially be used by journalists, bloggers, and citizens—the Internet’s intelligent crowds—to better scrutinize government’s activities.

Originating in the music world, the term mashup now also applies to applications that mix together disparate sets of data to create new and unique information. For example, the popular free-classified-ad site Craigslist.com is an almost definitive source for rental housing listings in urban areas. However, the site lists ads in the order that users add them to the site. This means that—using the Washington metropolitan area as an example—one listing could be for an apartment in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of the District and the very next ad for a house in Arlington, Virginia. This frustrated software engineer Paul Rademacher when he was looking for a place to live in Silicon Valley in 2004, so he

built HousingMaps.com, a mashup of the listings from Craigslist.com and Google Maps. This mashup allows users to bring up a map of the area in which they are interested (say five square blocks in a particular neighborhood) and pushpin icons will appear representing the properties available for rent in that area. Clicking on a pushpin brings up a bubble with the rental listing data, including rooms, price, location, photos, and a link to the actual listing.

What is amazing about a service like HousingMaps.com is that it is a new and unique information source that is richer and more useful than either Craig's List or Google Maps standing alone. What makes it possible is that Google chose to make its maps application interface open for anyone to use, and Craig's List chose to make its data freely available in an open and structured format. Their decisions to support openness and useful data formats allowed for an innovation that neither company could have predicted would emerge.

Book Burro, MAPLight, and More

When a site makes its data available in open formats, it cannot conceive of the many creative ways the data will be put to use. Book Burro, for example, is a plug-in for the popular Firefox Web browser that senses when you are looking at a page for a book (at Amazon.com, for example) and then fetches and displays data about the book's availability at local libraries, as well as the prices at competing online stores. Trendio uses open application interfaces from Yahoo, Google, and Technorati to index articles emanating from more than 3,000 news sources. It tracks the relative trends of words contained in those articles. The result is an index of trends in the media.

Mashups built on open interfaces and structured data represent a great potential fount of information about the workings of government. Their varied and unexpected outcomes can potentially make government activities transparent and reveal patterns now hidden in murky mountains of unstructured data. To get a sense of the possible, we can take a look at a leading transparency mashup called MAPLight.org.

The MAP in MAPLight.org stands for "money and politics," and the site's mission is to illuminate the connection between the two. Founded by computer expert Dan Newman, the site mashes together congressional voting data and campaign finance information. The result is a searchable database that highlights the connec-

tions between campaign contributions and how members of Congress vote.

Using the MAPLight database, users can look up a particular bill and see the interest groups, as well as the component individuals and corporations that support and oppose it. They can also see how members of Congress voted on bills and their contributors.

Crowdsourcing

If government data are successfully opened to public scrutiny online, seemingly impenetrable mountains of data will be made available. Mashups can help ease the information overload by highlighting the most interesting connections among data sets, but human judgment is still necessary to determine the most relevant facts. Crowdsourcing presents the key to sifting through the data made available by official disclosures, hacks, and mashups.

Although the United States has only 1,452 daily newspapers, about 70 million blogs are in operation, and about 120,000 new blogs come online each day. The vast majority of these blogs no doubt serve to inform and entertain a small circle of friends and relatives. Nevertheless, tens of thousands aspire to engage in journalism, and some have been successful. This affords a massive pool of ready and willing citizen journalists the likes of which traditional media has never assembled. This strength in numbers can allow the new technologies of transparency to be put to fruitful use despite the quantity of data available.

In his seminal essay, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar," Eric S. Raymond contrasts the open-source method of software development—in essence peer production or crowdsourcing—to the traditional hierarchical model. In the former, a large number of developers contribute simultaneously to the formulation and testing of software code, while central organization and a small number of developers typify the latter. He explains that one of the key differences is the number of eyes sifting through code looking for problems and solutions. He proposes what he calls Linus's Law: "Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow."

Given enough eyeballs, corruption and waste are similarly shallow problems. In the cathedral view of journalism, corruption is hidden from a relatively small number of practitioners (reporters) by the inaccessibility and sheer volume of government data. In the bazaar view, a vast number of eyes, aided by hacks and mashups, make

the amount of data less daunting. The number of eyeballs comes not just from bloggers aiming to do journalism (although they are likely the most dedicated), but also from average citizens contributing to interactive sites.

Interactive Web Sites

Interactive Web sites have begun to leverage what James Surowiecki calls the “wisdom of the crowds” to shed light on government data. For example, WashingtonWatch.com gathers data on bills pending before Congress and mashes them with Congressional Budget Office estimates on the cost of each bill to present the average cost of bills per family or individual. Aside from presenting this information, the site allows users to contribute by registering their support for or opposition to bills and by posting comments about bills. More important, the site is also a wiki for pending legislation. Each bill’s page contains a detailed summary of the bill, its status, and points in favor and against, all of which can be edited or added to by anyone. Congresspedia.com is a similar community-written wiki, which also includes biographical pages for members of Congress.

Conclusion

To hold government accountable for its actions, citizens must know those actions. To that end, they must insist that government act openly and transparently to the greatest extent possible. In the twenty-first century, this entails making government data available online and easy to access. If government data are made available online in useful and flexible formats, citizens will be able to utilize modern Internet tools to shed light on government activities. Such tools include mashups, which highlight hidden connections between different data sets, and crowdsourcing, which makes light work of sifting through mountains of data by focusing thousands of eyes on a particular set of data.

Today, however, the state of government’s online offerings is paltry. Some nominally publicly available information is not online at all, and the data that are online are often not in useful formats. Government should release public information online in a structured, open, and searchable manner.



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Introduction and Overview—Part II

by Alan P. Balutis

In the winter issue of The Public Manager, we opened a dialogue on PMA 44—the President's Management Agenda of the forty-fourth president. Our forum contributors outlined where and how our next government should differ and grouped their ideas into three categories—human resources (HR), technology, and a vision for twenty-first century government. In this issue, we continue the forum with articles on how we should go about accomplishing this transformation. What should the president and the White House management team do differently, and what topics deserve their attention early in the new administration? Like the contributors to Part I, these authors have been part of a luncheon seminar series organized this past year by Cisco's Business Solutions Group—the company's global consulting arm. In Part II, we group the ideas into four categories—two familiar ones (HR and technology) and two newcomers (acquisition and execution).

Human Resources

Steve Benowitz, an award-winning former government HR executive, proposes that the next administration must focus on three areas—sustaining leadership, recruiting talent, and improving its own HR management staff skills. He notes that the legislative and policy initiatives of the past decade “have not succeeded in redirecting the management of government's most critical asset, the people who perform its work.”

Technology

Tom Hughes serves as the chief information officer of the Social Security Administration and is a leading thinker in government information technology (IT) circles. Hughes argues that in a globally competitive environment, the United States must address the expanded use of IT to stay competitive. In this article, he focuses on providing inexpensive high-speed broadband to the public to (among other things) improve government service delivery. Hughes notes in his article that the United States now ranks fifteenth in the world in broadband penetration. Since he wrote it, we've fallen to twenty-fourth—right behind Estonia.

Acquisition

In recent years, the government has increasingly relied on the private sector. As a result, the number of contract workers has grown to 7.5 million, four times the federal civilian workforce. The risk of this approach, in the words of Warren Suss, a Pennsylvania-based IT consultant, is that the government could wind up “outsourcing its brain.” Two long-time acquisition executives address a long list of challenges for the future of federal acquisition. Shirl Nelson of Acquisition Solutions, Inc., focuses on three—workforce, oversight, and performance-based acquisition—with some suggestions for what the future can hold. She argues quite passionately, “We must go beyond the symptoms to find the reasons for current acquisition failures.”

Dr. Allan Burman, a former administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, squarely addresses what is behind Mr. Suss’s concern. What is inherently governmental? And has the government reached a “tipping point” regarding an overreliance on contractors?

Execution

Any incoming president faces the issue of which remnants of the previous administration to retain and which to discard. In a forthcoming article, I argue that three elements are worth not only retaining, but augmenting—e-government, accountability, and mobility. The latter two are the focus of articles by Robert Tobias of American University and Stephen O’Keeffe of the Telework Exchange, respectively.

Tobias calls for performance management to become the “president’s thing,” for the head of the executive branch to model the behavior sought and spend “less time on public policy creation and more time on public policy implementation.”

O’Keeffe finds a dynamic shift in the workforce environment, to which the government must adapt, where telework is propelling business continuity and pandemic planning, recruitment and retention, and real-estate savings.

Finally, Robert O’Neill, Elizabeth Kellar, Mark Abramson, and I wrap up the forum. O’Neill and Kellar suggest that one of the reasons we struggle with issues like health care, education, and the environment is that “we pay scant attention to the difficulty and the importance of working together and across boundaries.” Mark and I address the same issue—the challenge of managing across boundaries—perhaps not as boldly as O’Neill and Kellar.

In Part I of the forum, Professor Donald Kettl notes that the next president will face great policy challenges. To meet those challenges and deliver on campaign promises, our new president—and the American people—require a new and different government. We need a twenty-first-century government: responsive, resilient, flatter, more connected, seamless, and more transparent. Our hope is that this two-part forum constitutes a start in defining this new government and points the way to achieve it.

Alan Balutis is a director and distinguished fellow in the Internet Business Solutions Group, Cisco’s global consulting arm (www.cisco.com). The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent those of the Internet Business Solutions Group or of Cisco Systems, Inc. He can be reached at abalutis@cisco.com.



Forum:
The Next President's Management Agenda

Human Capital— The Most Critical Asset

by Stephen Benowitz

Since the comptroller general placed the management of human capital on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's list of high-risk programs in 1999, a series of legislative and policy initiatives have tried to recast the way federal agencies think about and perform the human capital function. Although many have been high profile, for the most part these efforts have not succeeded in redirecting the management of government's most critical asset, the people who perform its work.

New laws promoting the management of human capital—the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Act of 2002—and giving the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Defense (DoD) the authority to establish new personnel systems have not succeeded:

- ◆ The CHCO Act offers no substantive context in which human capital programs should be established.
- ◆ The DHS legislation has been held up because of court decisions overturning methods the department used to establish its program (without proper consultation with employee unions).
- ◆ The DoD legislation (upheld on appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals and pending the filing of a union appeal to the Supreme Court) has only been implemented for a small minority of nonunion positions.

Past efforts at the federal level have not succeeded in institutionalizing long-term change in the human capital function.

Both the DHS and DoD legislative efforts face congressional restrictions on further implementation in 2008 appropriations proposals.

President's Management Agenda

The current president has raised the management of human capital to a higher level by making it one of five initiatives in the *President's Management Agenda* (PMA). This initiative, overseen by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in consultation with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, establishes a framework for agencies in planning and executing their human capital programs and sets specific goals and time frames for their completion. From the latest published results (September 2007), sixteen of twenty-six agencies scored have received green scores for current status, and the others are yellow. Seven of the agencies rated yellow received green ratings for progress, two received yellow, and one red.

Substantial evidence indicates that compliance with the PMA has not reached the depth needed to sustain long-term change in organizations. Recent commentaries and roundtable discussions, as well as private conversations with leading human resources (HR) executives in the government, have led me to conclude that far too much emphasis has been placed on meeting current compliance requirements, and not enough has been placed on sustaining long-term, strategic change. The former is understandable—emphasis on the PMA is very public and has taken substantial resources, if only to track, measure, and submit the necessary reports. The latter is unacceptable, and that eventually will become apparent as the federal human capital crisis continues unabated.

Leadership for change is not coming from the top presidential candidates either. The management of government does not make for good stump speeches or sound bites. The current campaign seems to be following trends set by Ronald Reagan, possibly even Richard Nixon. Overall, the candidates are all against “waste, fraud, and abuse” and to greater or lesser extents promise to take steps to reduce operating costs by reducing the cost of the federal payroll. Giuliani would have cut the workforce by 20 percent (mostly through attrition,

which is a very risky approach as individuals and their skills often are not fungible); Clinton would cut the number of contractor employees by half a million (but does not provide any specifics). Who or what would fill the void caused by these reductions? More to the point, which skills would be lost, which must be renewed, and how would that be accomplished?

Several HR areas must be addressed in the near future. Among them are leadership and leadership development, sustaining leadership of programs as administrations change, recruitment and retention of vital talent, and remaking our HR management workforce. Elsewhere in this forum, Robert Tobias comments on an additional concern, the development and use of results-oriented performance management systems that link individual performance to organizational performance and to pay and rewards.

Sustaining Leadership

The core of America's leadership falls into two categories: political appointees who stay, on average, about two years, and career leaders in various senior executive roles. In the past twenty-plus years, the number of political appointees has grown and permeated farther down into the leadership structure. Democrats have shown the same tendency as Republicans in placing appointees in more and more positions. The so-called “Plum Book” (in reality U. S. Government Policy and Supporting Positions) supports this: the total number of politically appointed leadership positions (above GS-15) was 2,073 in 1996, 2,074 in 2000, and 2,158 in 2004.

The ratio between career and noncareer Senior Executive Service (SES) positions has only changed somewhat between 2000 and 2004. In 2000, noncareers held 9 percent of the SES appointments, and careers 89 percent; in 2004 (the latest available data from OPM's Fact Book), the percentages were 10 and 88. (In both years, 2 percent were filled by limited-term appointees.) The average age and retirement eligibility of career leaders has increased to a point where there is a legitimate question as to who will be “in charge” during the upcoming transition. The answer to this problem lies in relying less on political leadership and working more on building and sustaining career leaders.

Congressional action may be required, but the larger issue of recognizing the value of career executives is one that cannot be resolved by new legislation. Trust must be built between career executives and appointees, and both

Stephen Benowitz is a consultant, primarily on HR management issues, and counts among his clients federal and state government agencies, universities, and private-sector firms. He retired after 32 years in federal government, most in the HR arena, receiving three Presidential Executive Rank Awards. He can be reached at stevebenowitz@comcast.net.

need to have faith that the other doesn't have an agenda not supported by the public. Generally, positions below assistant secretary (or equivalent) should be filled only by career executives to ensure that leadership is retained as appointees leave the administration. Filling deputy assistant secretary positions (and, further, designating one of these as the "principal deputy") with career SES members will establish and maintain a higher level of career (and thus lasting) leadership for the government.

Career Executive Development

Ongoing development of the SES (and those aspiring to reach that level) is at best random and employee-driven. Although the majority of federal employees are satisfied with the training they receive, few agencies have placed enough emphasis on developing a core of leaders and potential leaders. In the past five to seven years, a large percentage of graduates of SES candidate development programs were never placed in SES positions. Further, little was done to help prepare new executives, including identifying them earlier in their careers than typical applicants for these positions (such as GS-15s). The well-recognized private-sector firms with outstanding executive development programs (GE and IBM, for example) identify candidates early, give them great assignments so they learn the full business of the firm, assign highly skilled mentors, and offer outstanding education opportunities. The civilian-sector approach, however, pales in comparison with that of the uniformed services: by the time the average officer reaches the grade of O4 (major or lieutenant commander), the officer may have received a graduate degree and spent one or two terms in a military school, all part of the services' career management programs. With few exceptions, the civilian executives have few similar opportunities.

To sustain ongoing executive leadership, the next administration should set two goals. The first is to require leadership development programs that transcend administrations and prepare our future leaders. This may require some creative approaches to the competitive requirements set in law for selection to the SES, but there is no reason that this cannot be achieved under current law. The second and more important objective is to fund these programs sufficiently and in a way that the money is protected for this purpose. What funding level is sufficient? Well, the proposal for the U.S. Public Service Academy (PSA) would authorize about \$205 million a year, including construction of a new campus for the fa-

cility. With the abundant supply of highly rated schools of public administration in the country, this funding could be spent much more wisely, in part, on developing future leaders. If only half of the proposed authorization for the PSA were spent on development of current and future executives, it would allow about \$10,000 per person, an extraordinary improvement and an outstanding legacy for any administration.

Staffing the Government

The work of the federal government has changed dramatically over the past 50 years, from a focus on clerical and administrative, "command-and-control" positions to ones that emphasize people with highly technical scientific and analytical skills who can work individually or as effective members of teams. Much discussion has focused on how to target great applicants, and the consensus is that several hurdles face the government: the declining size of the labor market over the next ten years, competition for those with highly developed skills, perceptions of the federal government as an employer of last choice, and competitiveness of the total federal compensation package. Success can only be achieved if the highest levels of leadership "own" the HR issues and ensure that program managers share this ownership with them.

The baby boomers (those born beginning in 1946) are now reaching retirement age; the Social Security Administration recently made a big show of the first baby boomer filing for Social Security. Subsequent generations are not as large, and the looming labor shortage in all categories is staggering, estimated at fifteen million in the U.S. alone within ten years. Absent a totally different approach to immigration, and a shift in the global economy to make it feasible to hire globally for U.S.-based work, this is a limitation of great significance with which all U.S. employers must cope. It will make it even more difficult for the federal government to staff itself appropriately (with its own employees or through contractors).

Strategic HR Planning

The first step in overcoming these hurdles is to ensure that government agencies are truly engaged in strategic HR planning, linked directly to long-range program plans. Absent very specific hiring goals, recruitment strategies, employee training and development, and aggressive compensation programs, the efforts will fail. The government is barely out of the gate on developing strate-

gic HR plans, so continued emphasis must be placed on these projects at the highest levels. The second step is to infuse the market with targeted recruiting (not just advertising but real-time, on-the-ground coverage) that seeks to identify and convince people to work for the government. Because of the need to fill so many positions (192,000 critical jobs in the next two years alone), which span all levels from entry to the most senior, recruiting will have to target two and possibly three generations over the next several years. Strategies will have to reflect not only generational needs (and should not assume that those in Generation X, for example, have the same needs or interests), but also must reflect the interests of various cultures and occupations (as well as others).

Hiring Rules and Compensation

Federal hiring rules and compensation often have been cited as the key roadblock to successful recruiting. Although this may be true in some cases, better use of existing compensation structures could be very useful. If recruiters were able to offer positions easily (on the spot when conducting interviews, for example), they would likely increase their acceptance rate dramatically. Job applicants often get discouraged at the time it takes for hiring decisions or perceive that the lengthy, bureaucratic process represents what working in the federal government is really like. The Department of State has been very effective in running online career fairs, which, to the applicants, appear seamless and result in “instant offers.” So it can be done.

Evidence is increasing that newer recruits do not consider “careers” the way the baby boomers did. They are interested in situations that offer growth, learning, and opportunities for the next job. They do not plan to spend an entire career with one agency or even the federal government. Recruiters need to be able to promise that new employees will receive immediate benefits, recognizing that they likely will stay with the agency for a relatively short time. However, the greater the investment is (including opportunities for new challenges), the more likely the individual will remain.

With regard to compensation, absent a long-overdue makeover of the federal pay structure, agencies have to make the various components of pay flexibility work for them and their recruits. Simple questions they must be able to answer relate to total pay, hiring, or signing bonuses and opportunities for advancement. In speaking with likely recruits, the language should be simple, things

bundled together, and paperwork absent. Agencies also must have a well-developed policy for education and learning, including student loan repayment and tuition support for additional training, especially graduate degrees, other technical training, and executive development and education. As noted elsewhere, this means a long-term commitment of funds to ensure that these promises can be made and kept.

Quality of Life

Finally, agencies need to make a long-term commitment to quality-of-life programs to encourage applicants. Chief among these is telework, which enables individuals to save time (and the environment) by not going to an office every day, an exercise that in the larger cities can involve commutes of up to two hours each way. Few agencies are using this flexibility well, either as an incentive or as a cost-saving device (for employees and the agency). Allowing the maximum number of employees to participate in such a program is also the best way to ensure that agency operations can continue in an emergency, such as a flu pandemic. Unlike a day or two lost because of bad weather, a flu pandemic could close offices for a long period. Federal employees would be needed to coordinate work among federal, state, and local health agencies and maintain many ongoing programs (such as Medicare and Social Security) as well as handle other potential emergencies.

The technology exists to do this from home, but an investment must be made in (1) allowing employees to telework now, (2) enhancing the security of information technology systems so work can be performed remotely, and (3) encouraging agency managers to trust their employees to make this work. If managers do not trust employees to work at home because they need to “see them” to believe they are working, attitudes need to change. Outputs and outcomes can and should be measured, and they should be the only measures necessary to determine whether telework is effective. The U. S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is generally recognized as the single best model in the federal government for an effective telework system; leaders of the new administration should learn from USPTO’s experience.

Renewing the HR Workforce

The government’s HR managers are in a crisis that must be addressed if they are going to be able to provide the strategic advice their agencies need. In the past,

knowing federal civil service laws, regulations, and policies (as HR was a command-and-control function) and having the technical ability to process transactions were enough. Technology is replacing the need for transactional skills (or at least making centralization of those functions possible, requiring fewer staff members). Now, at a minimum, an HR professional needs in-depth knowledge of the organization, analytical skills, including data collection and analysis, and communications ability, for working with managers and employees.

The year after the comptroller general declared federal human capital management a high-risk area, the Federal Section of the International Personnel Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) “sponsored a summit meeting of individuals representing senior human resource leaders and practitioners, the Office of Personnel Management and professional organizations to discuss the future of the federal human resource profession.” It then issued a report on the federal HR management profession, which proposed reshaping the skills of this workforce to focus on an analytical approach. Because of funding restrictions, not enough has been accomplished.

Recently, IPMA-HR reconvened the HR summit and expects to continue discussions and publish outcomes and recommendations. Essentially, the workforce must recruit individuals who have the necessary ana-

lytical skills and are not afraid of data (numbers), who can advise managers on how to recruit and retain an effective workforce to achieve the objectives of the agency, and who, ultimately, can serve as true partners in the management of their organizations. As with other occupations, this will require better recruitment, a commitment to ongoing learning, and competitive compensation.

Many in the HR profession who possess only transactional skills will no longer have a role in our agencies. Although shifting some to the newly developing HR service centers that perform the transactional work or to other support positions may be possible, a number of transactional positions will be eliminated (and individuals released or vacancies not filled). However, agencies must not fail to make the necessary commitment to filling HR positions with capable candidates—those who can provide the higher-level analytical and consulting skills needed to ensure that the HR strategy is well developed and effectively executed.

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Forum:
The Next *President's Management Agenda*

The Courage to Change When Challenged

by Tom Hughes

The nation faces an enormous challenge but has the opportunity to institute change through collaboration among top-level government and private-sector executives. Americans want an effective, efficient, and results-driven government as we move through the twenty-first century. We have great opportunities to leverage information technology (IT) in areas such as economic development, education, health care, homeland security, public

The U.S. government needs highly trained and talented top-level executives to promote innovation and growth through IT use.

safety, and worker productivity. Does the nation's government have the highly trained and talented top-level executives critical in promoting innovative ideas and growth through the use of IT? The answer is "No."

The government's process for hiring the top-level executives needed to implement this change-when-challenged approach appears to be broken. Government does not attract the best talent; instead, young people shy away from public service because they fear the bureaucracy moves too slowly for their career development paths. This top talent is crucial in leading government organizations to success using current IT capabilities and those yet to be discovered.

Our nation's top executives need to understand how to

- ◆ reinvigorate government by transforming today's organizations,
- ◆ use current and future technologies to institute change in government, and
- ◆ establish national goals beyond the current *President's Management Agenda* (PMA).

Reinvigorating Government

Reinvigorating the federal government requires changing the negative image many have of being a federal employee. Changing this image will help the government recruit the best top-level executives, who can serve as change agents as they address our current and future IT challenges. Unfortunately, many of those who seek change are criticized for their desire to modify processes that others see as "not broken." Thus, many current government change leaders face punishment rather than reward for the impact they have on process and policy.

Federal government efforts to attract talent and maintain institutional knowledge (in the face of downsizing, hiring freezes, attrition, and budget cutbacks) must be strategic. One approach is to hire younger leaders into the Senior Executive Service ranks or to hire effective senior private-sector managers to become part of the leadership hierarchy. The latter would challenge savvy business leaders with the opportunity to break down the twentieth-century stereotype of government bureaucracy, molding it into an environment willing to accept

change. The current presidential candidates have yet to address this issue.

Leveraging Technology

In a globally competitive environment, the United States must address the expanded use of IT to stay competitive. Many worry that China is taking our jobs, but its gross domestic product (GDP) is \$1.6 trillion, while we have a \$16 trillion economy with less than one-quarter of China's population. The real threat to our competitive status is that the top Chinese leaders, many of whom have advanced degrees in engineering, see technology as a means to achieve national goals. To stay competitive, the United States must develop a more dynamic educational system, one that can enable future political and agency leaders to grasp the power of IT and understand how it can be used to help America maintain its strong position in the global economy.

Many top federal government executives today don't understand how to use a BlackBerry, let alone leverage a simple idea like using Web technologies to communicate with the public or adroitly integrate two agencies with complicated policies and technologies for a common solution (health care, for example). One solution to this problem would be to ask major businesses to "loan" their top executives to agencies for a time to instill the changes needed to improve government.

Establishing National Goals

The current PMA "is an aggressive strategy for improving the management and effectiveness of the federal government." Although it is a good start, we need even more vision and commitment from the next president to engender ideas for improving the next generation of government services. We need to look at how the federal government uses IT, find out which uses work well, and meet the challenges of implementing new networking and IT to keep us competitive with other global economies.

One initiative that could be included in the next PMA would be to assemble the chief information officers to leverage broadband capability to the populace and improve government service delivery. The public

Tom Hughes is chief information officer at the U.S. Social Security Administration. He can be reached at Tom.Hughes@ssa.gov.

simply needs inexpensive high-speed communication (broadband).

The Federal Communications Commission's Web site offers some detail on what broadband can provide, including the following (adapted from the site):

- ◆ Access to a wide range of educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities and resources
- ◆ Provision of medical care to unserved and underserved populations through remote diagnosis, treatment, monitoring, and consultations with specialists
- ◆ Electronic commerce (e-commerce) that can help create new jobs, attract new industries, and offer access to regional, national, and worldwide markets
- ◆ Help in streamlining people's interaction with government agencies and information about government policies, procedures, benefits, and programs
- ◆ Public safety information and procedures, including
 - ❖ early warning/public alert systems and disaster preparation programs,
 - ❖ remote security monitoring and real-time security background checks, and
 - ❖ backup systems for public safety communications networks
- ◆ Access to new telecommunications technologies such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which allows voice communication using the Internet
- ◆ Ability to use Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) and Video Relay Services (VRS) to communicate more easily, quickly, and expressively with voice telephone users.

Because of the wide scope of application, the lack of high-speed broadband penetration is a national issue. Government leaders appear to be taking a wait-and-see approach regarding faster broadband rollout. The United States now ranks fifteenth in the world in broadband implementation, down from fourth just a few years ago: how long can we continue to have the largest GDP when we are constantly dropping in the ranks of broadband use? The next administration needs to take action to move the United States into first place. To do so, we must jettison old dogmatic policy and make way for the next generation of technological advances. This change will bring new opportunities for America to advance in nanotechnology, biotechnology, Internet leverage, improved graphical systems, and more.

Conclusion

A drastic change takes a great deal of knowledge and courage, but we can't afford to maintain the status quo. We need the courage to continue changing government. Our candidates for president need to understand these challenges, set an agenda involving smart executives and next-generation technology, and begin communicating it in their speeches to America.

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There are two barriers that often prevent communication between the young and their elders. The first is middle-aged forgetfulness of the fact that they themselves are no longer young. The second is youthful ignorance of the fact that the middle aged are still alive.

—Jessamyn West

Acquisition Challenges, 2008 and Beyond

by Shirl Nelson

As we head into 2008, federal acquisition faces a long list of challenges; three of the most pressing are the workforce, oversight, and performance-based acquisition.

Workforce

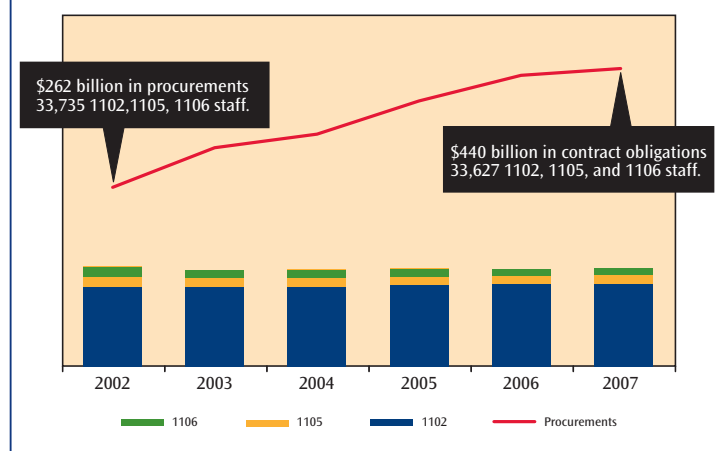
The key challenge for federal acquisition is rebuilding the workforce to give it the right size and right skills. There simply are not enough people to do the work, which greatly increased in volume and complexity at the same time that the workforce was slightly declining (Figure 1). Some of those remaining in the workforce lack the skills to handle task order awards, much less the award of original contracts to support major programs.

As veteran practitioners have left the workforce, the federal government has lost their knowledge and experience, as well as their availability as mentors for the next generation. The acquisition workforce of the 1970s and 1980s featured supervisors who reviewed their employees' work, coached them to improve, and helped them work through challenges. That is much less prevalent today. Today, supervisors themselves carry crushing workloads and have little time to mentor junior staff members. The little training available is too often of the "check-the-box" type rather than effective, situational, just-in-time training likely to produce better results—and more competent people.

What is the "right size" for the workforce? We can calculate cost-to-spend and other ratios and conduct a comparative analysis for the contracting component of the acquisition workforce. Such analysis renders statistical indicators for workforce size, but we must consider other factors before deciding for a particular agency (see box).

The new administration needs to rebuild the workforce, properly oversee it, and correctly use performance-based acquisition.

Figure 1. Workforce and Workload 2002–07



Source: Procurements FPDS-NG data; Staff (1102, 1105, 1106), FedScope data.

Organizational structure and authority
What level of procurement authority exists within the contracting operation? To what extent are contracting officer warrants provided to promote delegation to the optimum level? Are warrants issued only to those qualified with proper education, training, certifications, and experience? Is the organization operating in parity with its customers?
Span of control
What is the supervisory span of control (supervisor-to-nonsupervisor ratio)? Is it representative of a control-oriented environment, where production and compliance are valued, or more of an empowered environment preferred by higher-educated, self-motivated leaders of change? When managers function more as enablers of change than as reviewers of work, the ratio can be higher. When day-to-day supervision is necessary, a lower ratio is in order.
Policies and procedures
Are proper and current policies, procedures, and processes in place to ensure efficient use of resources? Are they maintained in an easily accessible central location, such as an electronic resource? Is it necessary to continuously issue policy letters that fall outside the normal policy infrastructure? Are employees confused about organizational practices in certain areas, necessitating peer-to-peer collaboration on how others approach a practice?
Quality and internal management controls
Are acquisition plans, source-selection plans, and award decisions reviewed at the appropriate levels? Is an acquisition system review process in place to detect process issues, and does management act on it to improve quality? Have negative audit findings detected quality issues and lack of internal controls?
Level of automation and reliability of information
Do managers have the right information at the right time to make decisions? Are procurement processes automated and integrated with other agency systems to improve efficiency?
Training and development programs
Is the staff well trained to perform routine tasks (such as simplified purchases) that clearly require less supervision? Is the staff trained in emerging practices such as performance-based acquisition and strategic sourcing that provide value-added services to the customer? Staff members should be developed to be effective business advisors rather than merely transaction processors. Is the training budget sufficient to ensure continuous training of the staff?
Trend analysis
Are budgets increasing or decreasing? Is spending per employee rising or falling? Is the cost-to-spend ratio increasing or decreasing? Are the number of transactions increasing per employee or decreasing? Organizations should track data over time and analyze trends to synthesize the information in the context of these other characteristics of an organization's maturity.
Complexity and acquisition practices
Are acquisitions becoming more complex? Are major systems being replaced, requiring more sophisticated thinking? Are acquisition managers aligned with agency planning? Are they thinking and sourcing strategically? Are they contracting for results?
Customer alignment and teaming
Does the agency embrace integrated project teaming, where the contracting officer functions as the "deputy for acquisition," or is a "throw it over the wall" mentality frustrating customers and diminishing organizational efficiency?
Employee morale and turnover
Are employees leaving at an unusually high rate? Is stress affecting morale? Studies have shown that it costs at least 150 percent of an employee's annual salary to rehire and train a new employee.
Available resources
Are other resources, including contract support to meet workload or special skills demands, being used for non-inherently governmental work to their greatest benefit?

Shirl Nelson is a distinguished fellow with Acquisition Solutions, Inc. She can be reached at Shirl.Nelson@acqsolinc.com.

Hiring more people doesn't help if we drop them into a toxic environment, one that stifles innovation and kills enthusiasm. Managers too often throw their newly hired, perhaps even freshly trained, recruits into this type of environment and then quickly lose the benefit of their investment. Turnover is costly, as mentioned previously. A toxic environment has the following characteristics:

- ♦ *Lack of leadership.* No one at the top understands the importance of acquisition, which now accounts for anywhere from 40 percent to as much as 90 percent of agency discretionary budgets. No one inspires the staff to make a difference. Shared values are not communicated. No positive culture is identifiable: those from outside view the acquisition organization as an obstacle rather than a partner. Acquisition managers don't demonstrate any strategic thinking or behavior modeling that makes program and financial managers in the agency want to give them any influence.
- ♦ *No strategic linkage.* The staff has no widely shared understanding of the relation of their jobs to mission accomplishment. A grand plan for sourcing strategically to meet customer requirements is lacking; the focus is on completing individual transactions. Individual performance plans are not linked with the success (not just the award) of major contracts and programs.
- ♦ *No culture for capturing and sharing knowledge.* Communities of practice and technologies to support knowledge capture, sharing, and reuse are absent, as are robust, up-to-date policies and procedures in a centralized and easily accessible—ideally, electronic—location for all to use. Everyone is on his or her own. Not only do employees not have experienced supervisors to coach and mentor them, they don't have policies and procedures to consult for consistent guidance in producing high-quality work.

Acquisition managers certainly don't want to foster toxic environments for their staffs, but many do not have the time or resources to assess their organizations, much less address the problems.

PBA works when its methods are followed from pre-award planning through post-award performance.

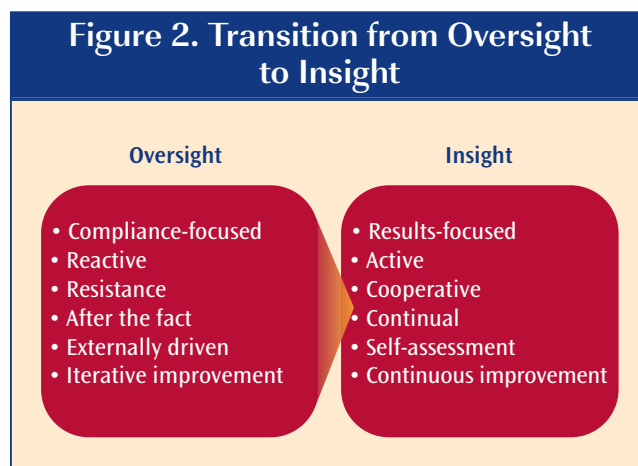
Oversight

A second key challenge is the appropriate extent and intent of oversight (of the management kind, as opposed to criminal detection), which is certainly necessary, but the extent must be tempered. Oversight was mild in the 1970s, severe in the 1980s, very mild in the 1990s, and op-

pressive in the current decade. When the overseers outnumber the doers by about 5:1 (as in the Federal Emergency Management Agency), they can contribute to the problem rather than the solution. A workforce already stretched to the mistake-prone limit is overburdened responding to oversight demands—especially when providing documents to two, three, or even

four oversight entities concurrently, or worse, in a row. Oversight has to feature common sense and balance.

The intent should be insight rather than merely oversight. Figure 2 outlines a transition that could be constructive for acquisition improvements. However, two factors are converging to intensify acquisition oversight in the next year or so: current movement in that direction and the pending elections, which tend to generate greater scrutiny of incumbent practices of all kinds.



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Performance-Based Acquisition

The third key acquisition challenge is full implementation of results-based acquisition, often referred to as performance-based acquisition (PBA). Congress, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Depart-

ment of Defense, and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy remain committed to PBA. However, although agencies report they are doing PBA, many of the reported awards are not PBA. The Acquisition Advisory Panel (AAP) confirmed the findings of previous studies that many contracts are incorrectly reported as PBA: “[Federal Procurement Data System] FPDS data are insufficient and perhaps misleading regarding use and success of PBA.” The AAP’s survey of 55 contracts and orders reported as PBA found that only 36 percent reflected all the PBA attributes, 22 percent were questionable, and an astonishing 42 percent were not PBA at all.

Many observations (including those of Acquisition Solutions, Inc.) of government solicitations confirm that agencies “do not have a good understanding of performance-based contracting and how to take full advantage of it.” Many contracts awarded using PBA methods are not managed as PBA. To be effective, PBA methods—such as managing by relationship, selecting the meaningful and vital few performance measures (versus the trivial many), and monitoring the metrics—must be followed after award. When contracts fail, we have to look at the causes of the problems and stop attacking the symptoms.

The AAP’s findings on PBA indicate that establishing good performance measures is one of the more difficult aspects of conducting a PBA. Our experience bears this out. Our clients, including those who fervently believe in PBA, tell us that they don’t know how to articulate outcomes, nor do they know how to measure results other than for compliance with specific requirements.

Leading PBA Practices

Establishing optimal performance measures and metrics is just part of the challenge of PBA. PBAs, especially transformational PBAs, should be led by a team of program and contracting personnel that employs these leading practices:

- ◆ Ensuring strategic alignment with agency goals and stakeholder needs
- ◆ Developing change management strategies to address the cultural transformation that is essential for successful PBA
- ◆ Developing communications strategies for continually communicating with stakeholders, including industry
- ◆ Conducting one-on-one market research with industry leaders

- ◆ Publicizing the agency budget (not the independent government estimate) for the project for scope and solution realism
- ◆ Articulating requirements in terms of objectives and desired outcomes
- ◆ Providing meaningful due diligence opportunity for down-selected vendors to fully understand the environment and constraints under which their solution needs to be successful (due diligence is necessary for preparing realistic proposals)
- ◆ Establishing the few (rather than many) meaningful performance measures and metrics
- ◆ Having governance mechanisms in place prior to contract award
- ◆ Managing for outcomes according to the performance measures and metrics, rather than compliance with detailed specifications.

Compliance or Results

PBA is hard, complicated acquisition, as show by its definition:

“ (1) Describe the requirements in terms of results required rather than the methods of performance of the work; (2) Use measurable performance standards (i.e., terms of quality, timeliness, quantity, etc.) and quality assurance surveillance plans (see 46.103(a) and 46.401(a)); (3) Specify procedures for reductions of fee or for reductions to the price of a fixed-price contract when services are not performed or do not meet contract requirements (see 46.407); and (4) Include performance incentives where appropriate.”

For FPDS reporting purposes, a minimum of 80 percent of the anticipated obligations under the procurement action must meet the above requirements.

Not enough acquisition organizations have the capacity or skills to conduct and manage an acquisition for results. It’s so much easier to administer a contract for compliance. Therefore, behaviors slip into compliance tracking—such as whether reports were delivered or the contractor complied with specifications—rather than monitoring and measuring for results—such as whether objectives were met and goals achieved.

This brings us full circle to the sophistication of the larger government acquisition workforce (the one engaged from requirements identification through completion of performance). Why is it that we spend billions of dollars on programs, pour in millions more to save troubled contracts and programs, but don’t invest in the

workforce resources necessary to get the job done right in the first place?

Our clients tell us that when they follow performance-based methods, they get a better result. They get a much faster award than when developing detailed requirements and specifications, and they get better performance when they have the right measures and metrics. When they get off track, usually because of some external force such as program budget cuts or significant leadership turnover, the wheels fall off the wagon. In other words, PBA works when its methods are followed from pre-award planning through post-award performance. But all too often, behaviors revert after award.

Solutions

The way forward requires experienced leaders inside the system, in both the executive and legislative branches, who understand acquisition and have the capacity to lead.

Appropriators should address the resource needs of the acquisition workforce. Senators Susan Collins and Joseph Lieberman's S. 680, the Accountability in Government Contracting Act, will help if enacted. More is needed, such as training funds and a government-industry exchange program for acquisition, as antithetical as that may seem in this era of heightened conflict-of-interest concerns. Although a government-industry acquisition exchange program with proper safeguards can be devised and would benefit the government as much if not more than industry, it's an idea not likely to come to fruition at this time—but it's one that should some day be realized.

Overseers should strike a better balance between oversight and mission needs, striving for constructive insight that will help agency managers improve acquisition operations. Nonetheless, agency managers should prepare for increased scrutiny by conducting their own assessments using the GAO Framework for Assessing Acquisition Organizations. In fact, they should go a step further and ask their overseers for help in planning their self-assessments and then document their improvements.

Agency managers should consider their overall environment before determining staff size and investing in

new hires. They should invest in the workforce, not just with check-the-box training but with organizational improvements that address the need for learning and growth, inspire innovation and achievement, and provide guidance and tools such as effective training tied to performance.

The future of PBA depends on following the practices and modeling the behaviors that produce results, from planning through final performance—not just to award.

Summary

The acquisition workforce will be gradually rebuilt, but to optimize that workforce, acquisition leaders must establish an organization strategically aligned with the direction of the agency and an environment that fosters learning, innovation, and creativity. Acquisition oversight will intensify over the next year or two, but acquisition leaders can prepare by conducting their own assessments and embarking on improvements in anticipation of external reviews.

The benefits of PBA have not yet been fully realized because many challenges with implementation remain, notably the lack of understanding of what PBA really is and the dearth of skills to articulate and measure outcomes. We must go beyond the symptoms to find the reasons for current acquisition failures. Commitment to PBA will continue because the methods work when fully employed.

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Inherently Governmental Functions: At a Tipping Point?

by Allan V. Burman

More than 15 years ago, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy issued Policy Letter 92-1, Subject: Inherently Governmental Functions. This 1992 document offered the first government-wide guidance to help executive branch officers and employees avoid making “an unacceptable transfer of official responsibility to government contractors.” Implemented in Subpart 7.5 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, the policy has remained relatively unchanged since its issuance. Even the comptroller general’s 2003 Commercial Activities Panel proposed no significant adjustments to this guidance as the panel addressed the merits and procedures for contracting out government work.

However, as more and more reports question the government’s reliance on contractors for activities ranging from providing security services in Iraq to overseeing another contractor’s performance, is it time for another look? Does the policy still hold up? Has the government reached a “tipping point” regarding an overreliance on contractors, as suggested by Charles Tiefer in *Government Executive* magazine? What was the reason for putting it in place back then? Do changed circumstances today require the government to rethink the policy, pulling back from the level of discretion afforded by this earlier document? And if so, how should that be done?

Inherently Governmental Functions

Letter 92-1 states that an inherently governmental function is a function that is “so intimately related to the public interest as to mandate performance by government employees.” It goes on to explain that these types of functions involve exercising discretion in the use of government authority or making

Should the government rethink its long-standing policy on contracting out work?

value judgments in government decision making. The specific definition is as follows:

“An inherently governmental function involves, among other things, the interpretation and execution of the laws of the United States so as to:

- (a) bind the United States to take or not to take some action by contract, policy, regulation, authorization, order, or otherwise;
- (b) determine, protect, and advance its economic, political, territorial, property, or other interests by military or diplomatic action, civil or criminal judicial proceedings, contract management, or otherwise;
- (c) significantly affect the life, liberty, or property of private persons;
- (d) commission, appoint, direct, or control officers of employees of the United States; or
- (e) exert ultimate control over the acquisition, use, or disposition of the property, real or personal, tangible or intangible, of the United States, including the collection, control, or disbursement of appropriated and other Federal funds.”

These broad prescriptions are bolstered by a set of examples that offer more detailed guidance on what should or should not be undertaken by contractors. The policy relies on OMB Circular No. A-76, “Performance of Commercial Activities,” to identify the activities that could be contracted out, but presents its own list of activities that require special attention because they so closely affect the public interest.

The list of inherently governmental activities includes—among other things—such specific actions as the “direction and control of federal employees, the determination of federal program priorities and budget requests, and determining what supplies or services are to be acquired by the government.” All nineteen items listed can still be found in Appendix A of 92-1. The document also includes an Appendix B that identifies nineteen activities that are not inherently governmental but may approach being so because of the way the government administers the contractor’s performance or because of the way the contractor performs. The latter nineteen items include services that involve or relate to the de-

velopment of regulations, preparing budgets, or support of acquisition planning.

Non-Inherently Governmental Functions

The basic distinction between the two lists is the question of who decides the course of action. The Appendix A activities require governmental decision making because they are so intimately related to the public interest that no question of ulterior motivation can be allowed to arise concerning those choices. Accountability remains squarely with the public servant. Appendix B, however, identifies a significant opportunity for contractors to contribute to the decision-making process, but limits their roles to providing support or information that will allow an informed choice. As stated in the policy letter, “Inherently governmental actions do not normally include gathering information for or providing advice, opinions, recommendations, or ideas to government officials.”

That distinction was made as a means to allow the government to take advantage of significant expertise in the private sector on a host of topics. However, the intention is clear to ensure that the government remains fully in charge and in command of the actions it is taking. This question of accountability is central to the issue of what should or should not be contracted out. In many ways, this may be the rub today. Is the government staffed and equipped to make independent judgments on the advice it is receiving from contractors? In many respects, this becomes a human capital and resource constraint issue, touching all aspects of the government employee-contractor equation, from staff size to expertise and training, and even to the basic questions of pay comparability and hiring efficiencies.

Policy Letter Justification

Various agency policies regarding these types of activities had been around for years, but the 1992 document was the first attempt at a consistent government-wide approach to the issue. As part of the justification for its issuance, the document states: “Agencies have occasionally relied on contractors to perform certain functions in such a way as to raise questions about whether public policy is being created by private persons.” A clear case in point is the proscription in the document on drafting congressional testimony, preparing responses to congressional correspondence, and preparing responses

Allan V. Burman, PhD, is president of Jefferson Solutions, the government division of the Jefferson Consulting Group. He is also an adjunct professor at George Mason University, a former administrator for federal procurement policy in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, and the author of Policy Letter 92-1. He can be reached at aburman@jeffersonconsulting.com.

to audit reports to the inspectors general, U.S. Government Accountability Office, or other federal audit entity. Although approval of a document is normally considered an inherently governmental activity, drafting some portions of it is not. However, in light of the sensitivity of these specific activities and the questions that might be raised about “who is in charge,” the document clearly prohibits using contractors to perform these roles.

Similarly, the document cites instances where “de facto control over contract performance has been transferred to contractors” as another reason to establish a clear policy that ensures solid federal oversight to remove any ambiguity about who is the decision maker. In this case, the document identifies the following as a major factor to consider in deciding “whether the award of a contract might affect, or the performance of a contract has affected, a transfer of official responsibility”:

“The contractor’s ability to take action that will significantly and directly affect the life, liberty or property of individual members of the public, including the likelihood of the contractor’s need to resort to force in support of a police or judicial function; whether force, especially deadly force is more likely to be initiated by the contractor or by some other person; and the degree to which force may have to be exercised in public or relatively uncontrolled areas. (Note that contracting for guard, convoy security, and plant protection services, armed or unarmed, is not proscribed by these policies.)”

The above section reads like something developed to address the Blackwater debate today. In many ways, it also shows the limitation of the policy in that it states these issues as important to consider but provides no bright-line test of allowability. In other words, as the document states, a decision needs to be made on the basis of the “totality of the circumstances” to determine the appropriateness of contracting something out to the private sector. Although some activities, such as providing maintenance support on a military base, are easy to address, others, such as the kinds of politically sensitive actions many are concerned about today (intelligence gathering or security services

in Iraq, for example) are not. The policy demands a case-by-case determination. Moreover, this middle area is broad, decidedly gray, and subject to considerable debate.

The Qualified Staff

A factor noted in the policy letter that perhaps requires further review and reflection today is the point, “Agencies must, however, have a sufficient number of trained and experienced staff to manage Government

programs properly. The greater the degree of reliance on contractors the greater the need for oversight by agencies.” It further addresses this concern, noting, “Official responsibility to approve the work of contractors is a power reserved to government officials. It should be exercised with a thorough knowledge and understanding of the contents submitted by con-

tractors and a recognition of the need to apply independent judgment in the use of these work products.”

Formulating an inherently governmental policy that includes a bright-line test for every activity for which the government may want to consider using contractors would be difficult. Moreover, government officials should have discretion on these types of decisions on the basis of the circumstances. However, ensuring that the government has the staff and expertise to make these informed and independent decisions seems much less of an issue. Here, the answer is ensuring that the agency has the core competency to adequately carry out its oversight and decision-making responsibilities. If the activity is central to the agency’s core mission, perhaps further review should be required to see that resources—trained staff members with appropriate expertise and in sufficient numbers—are available to ensure the public interest is served.

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The President, Outcomes, and Performance

by Robert Tobias

Since Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, the federal government has been struggling to measure outcome rather than output. Agreement is universal that designing and implementing an outcome-based performance management system would increase agency performance, as well as taxpayer satisfaction with the federal government.

Performance Management System

An example of an outcome performance management system can be found in the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The agency wants to be able to measure whether its actions increase the rate of voluntary compliance (outcome) rather than measuring only the number of taxpayers audited (output). The IRS's primary mission is increasing citizens' compliance with the tax code, so knowing whether it is achieving that goal is more important than counting audits. Most federal agencies are in similar situations.

Why doesn't every government agency at every level have outcome performance management systems? Why has it taken the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) so long to start something so basic, especially when improving organizational results is this administration's mantra? The executive branch needs presidential leadership to undertake such an initiative. Only last year, after this president had five years in office, did OMB mandate that every agency select employees to form a test group and design and implement an outcome performance management system for those employees. The executive branch is still at the starting gate, while the administration's remaining days in power dwindle.

Will the tests lead to learning, adaptation, and broad implementation, or the slow death associated with "no support"? The jury is still out. We do know, however, that creating a performance management system with outcome goals is very difficult.

The Challenges

The challenges to a performance management system include the following:

- ◆ Agencies have difficulty accepting accountability for achieving outcome goals when they have little or no direct control over the outcome. For

Changing from outputs to outcomes—evaluating individuals and organizations on results—requires cultural change and leadership at the top.

example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has no control over whether the public drives while drunk, but it nonetheless accepted responsibility for reducing the highway fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled from a baseline of 1.69 in 1995 to 1.38 in 2008—an improvement of nearly 20 percent. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education has control of only 8.3 percent of K–12 school funds, but it is measuring its success in terms of increased student achievement.

- ◆ If an agency is willing to accept accountability for an outcome goal, defining that goal is often difficult. OMB defines outcomes as “the intended result of carrying out a program or activity ... an event or condition that is external to the program or activity and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public.” For example, according to OMB, the output goal for a tornado warning system might be the amount of warning time provided. An outcome goal is much broader and might include “the number of lives saved and property damage averted.”
- ◆ Initiating an outcome performance management system requires a change from hierarchical command-and-control management to a flatter organizational structure. Setting and achieving outcome goals requires agency leaders to create and manage networks of contractors, nonprofit organizations, and state and local governments. They cannot afford to wait for five levels of approval before acting.
- ◆ If agreement is reached on appropriate outcome goals, creating systems for collecting the data and evaluating results is difficult. The IRS had an easier time counting the number of audits than determining the level of voluntary taxpayer compliance.
- ◆ Finally, once outcome goals are defined and the measurement data collected, organizational goals must be subdivided into individual employee goals that can be identifiably linked to the organizational goals—an endeavor that requires difficult, disciplined, and detailed work.

Robert Tobias is the director of public sector executive education and director of the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation at American University. He is the former president of the National Treasury Employees Union. He can be reached at rtobias1@verizon.net.

Changing from Outputs to Outcomes

Changing from output to outcome goals, and evaluating individuals and organizations on outcomes rather than outputs, calls for significant cultural change. No longer is an employee’s “working hard” a measure of success; rather, the measure is the influence of the work on the outcome goals of the agency. No longer do “long hours” alone generate an “outstanding” rating; they must lead to measurable results. Long-standing implicit agreements between employees and their managers defining loyalty and accessibility as the basis for an outstanding rating have to be eliminated and replaced by measurable results.

The resulting impact on evaluations, promotions, within-grade increases, and monetary awards would be significant. The current practice of annual evaluations containing great prose but little about specific, defined, and measured results would end. Passing one award per group around to several top performers would end. Only the top performer would receive an award, and that might be the same person every year.

Leading Change Who Will Answer?

Given the significant organizational change effort, who should be responsible for leading the change? Employees, supervisors, mid-level managers, unions, and members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) are resisting and will continue to resist movement to an outcome-measurement system. Why not have chief human capital officers (CHCOs) champion the effort? Over the years, human resources professionals have been responsible for creating the evaluation forms and systems. Moreover, political appointees turned to the CHCOs when OMB demanded each agency create a performance management test.

Although important, talented persons, CHCOs have no control over how managers actually manage individual performance. They are staff members to agency political leaders and career program managers responsible for results. Political and career managers, not CHCOs, must determine the program goals and insist that supervisors—working with those they lead—establish individual goals. CHCOs should assist agency political appointees and program managers in setting goals and give managers the training needed to create the relationships necessary to achieve the goals. Because “staff members” do not have program responsibility, they can-

not successfully lead the implementation of the major organizational change efforts needed to implement a performance management system. So long as performance management is a “CHCO thing,” its successful, broad implementation in the federal government is highly unlikely.

Although critical to a performance management system, program managers or members of the career SES are also not viable candidates to successfully lead the effort. To begin with, they have no time to plan and implement such a large change effort. They already have incredibly busy schedules as they seek to meet ever-increasing output goals with fewer people and resources. Giving them such prodigious additional work, on top of an already heavy workload, would not lead to success.

Furthermore, successful cultural change efforts reap few rewards and pose significant risk of punishment for failure. No large bonus is at the end of a performance management implementation rainbow, but unfavorable reports from the U.S. Government Accountability Office and inspectors general, stories in the *Federal Times* and *Washington Post*, and congressional inquiries and testimony can put black marks on career federal employees’ records. Finally, friends and colleagues are guaranteed to resist.

Why don’t the political appointees who head agencies and departments champion this change? Every textbook and consultant says that the “person at the top” must lead a significant change effort. But political appointees are, for the most part, uninterested in public policy implementation, and that makes perfect sense. They are evaluated by their president, peers, academics, and many agency stakeholders on their ability to create new public policy that will distinguish the sitting president’s initiatives from those of the other political party. Their traditional legacy is getting legislation passed and regulations issued, not effectively and efficiently implementing policies. Like SES executives and mid-level

managers, political appointees do not have the time for significant change efforts. Every minute spent on public policy implementation is one away from public policy creation.

Similarly, success holds no reward, but may be met with the grudging question, “Why did it take you so long?” The political appointee’s tombstone is not inscribed, “Helped to create more effective government.” If implementation fails, though, a humiliating public flogging could ensue.

No presidential plan has included a president’s modeling the behavior he sought

The Top Manager

At the “top” of the federal government is the president. Presidents have long talked about the need for a more effective and efficient executive branch. Each has had a plan of action that involves others’ changing their behavior. Presidents have demanded plans, new measures of success, public accountability, and so on. One need only recall President Nixon’s zero-based budgeting, President Clinton’s “Reinventing Government,” and President George W. Bush’s *President’s Management Agenda*.

No presidential plan has included a president’s modeling the behavior he sought—spending less time on public policy creation and more time on public policy implementation. We are stuck between presidential exhortations for change and the reality faced by those trying to make the change. Before political appointees, SES executives, and mid-level managers take the risk of spending time and energy on creating and implementing a performance management system, they need to see their boss, the president, change. They need to see the president spend time on this movement in cabinet meetings, talking directly to federal employees, and personally monitoring success. They need to see the president taking the same risks he asks the rest of us to take.

When performance management becomes the “president’s thing,” then—and only then—will it be institutionalized in the executive branch.

Shifting Federal Telework into Drive

by Stephen W. T. O'Keeffe

In early November 2007, the House Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia held a hearing on how to break new ground in telework. Telework Exchange, among other witnesses, testified on why the federal government is not further along in its telework adoption. Although resistance still remains, the workforce dynamics are rapidly shifting, and the government must adapt.

Telework is transforming the work environment—propelling business continuity and pandemic planning, recruitment and retention, and real-estate savings—to the benefit of government agencies, employees, and America. As the green movement takes hold, telework is not only improving the lot of employees and businesses, but providing a breath of fresh air for the environment.

Why Care about Telework?

Commuting

The Price

The federal workforce spends \$20 billion a year on commuting. If we extrapolate that figure to the U.S. white collar workforce, America spends \$572 billion per year on commuting, much more than the gross domestic product of the Republic of Ireland. According to Telework Exchange data, Americans burn 26 billion gallons of gas by commuting each year—or 62 percent of the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Pollution

The average commuting federal worker pumps 8 tons of pollutants per year into the environment, or 14.4 million tons across government. If all eligible federal workers teleworked two days per week, we could eliminate one-quarter of these emissions.

The benefits of telework justify accelerated agency adoption.



Adapted from www.teleworkexchange.com.

Time and Productivity

The average federal worker spends 245 hours commuting each year—more time than on vacation. If all eligible workers teleworked just two days per week, the federal workforce would reclaim 73.3 million hours of their lives each year. That's the equivalent of an additional week of personal time for every federal employee each year.

Pandemic Planning

As we approach flu season, pandemic planning is at the forefront. The president's pandemic plan calls out telework as a central plank in preparedness. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) *Human Capital Planning for Pandemic Influenza* states, "Telework allows the federal government to remain responsive to the nation's needs at all times and should be an integral part of any agency's plans for continuity of operations." In a Telework Exchange poll, only 27 percent of federal employees said they will show up for work in the event of a pandemic (Figure 1). Just 21 percent said they are aware of their agency's pandemic plans, and of those, only 27 percent noted that their agency incorporates telework into continuity-of-operations (COOP) plans. Who will attend to America if Uncle Sam calls in sick?

Figure 1. Will you show up for work?



Source: Telework Exchange; *Federal Contact: Bird Flu in America*, May 11, 2006.

The Roadblocks

Given these statistics, why are federal telework roadways rife with obstacles?

Policy Confusion

No consistent telework framework or eligibility criteria exist for employees. OPM reports only 10 percent of eligible workers telework today, but a recent study shows that 79 percent would telework if given the option. These numbers don't make sense.

In fact, OPM needs to take a telework leadership role—like helping to establish a telework-friendly seal of approval for telework positions on USAJobs.gov. This would allow agencies to identify new jobs as telework-friendly to make the jobs more attractive. We proposed this program to OPM almost two years ago, and we are still waiting for an answer. At consecutive congressional hearings, members have asked OPM about its success in getting managers to buy in to telework as a standard operating procedure at their agencies. At each hearing, OPM has the same answer—no quantifiable data. Why not? OPM needs to get the data and provide the leadership.

That said, Telework Exchange will independently launch a government telework-friendly job bank on our Web site in 2008. Agencies will be able to post telework-friendly job positions on www.teleworkexchange.com. The site will empower Americans to search for telework-friendly federal jobs.

Intransigent Management

Management resistance is still the major impediment. Regrettably, in too many places in government, it's still management by walking around. That said, managers become more favorable to the telework idea as they manage teleworkers or telework themselves. The problem is that too few managers are teleworking.

Poor Mission Alignment

Just 35 percent of federal managers say that their agencies support telework. If telework is critical to COOP and agency leaders are committed to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20, then clearly something is getting lost in translation.

Stephen W.T. O'Keeffe is the founder and executive director of Telework Exchange. Launched in April 2005, this public-private partnership focuses on demonstrating the tangible value of telework and serving the emerging educational and communication requirements of the federal teleworker community. The organization facilitates communication among federal teleworkers, telework managers, and information technology professionals. He can be reached at SOkeeffe@okco.com. For more information, visit www.teleworkexchange.com.

Lack of Resources

Agencies do not dedicate sufficient time and resources to telework. The majority of telework coordinators spend 25 percent or less of their time on telework.

Traffic Flow

Telework is not completely gridlocked, but traffic is clearly moving too slowly. Examples of agencies that took the right road with their telework programs include the Defense Information Systems Agency; Internal Revenue Service Wide Shared Services Virtual Office Program; Federal Aviation Administrations' Flights Standards, Western Pacific Region, San Francisco International Field Office; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration; and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The General Services Administration recently announced an aggressive telework commitment goal to expand telework to 50 percent of eligible employees by 2010.

In addition, Capitol Hill has shown overwhelming support with the Senate's introduction of S.1000, the "Telework Amendment" included in H.R. 3221, a proposal for a "National Telework Week," and most recently the introduction of the "Telework Improvements Act of 2007" in H.R. 4106. But even with the fuel-promoting adoption, only a few agencies are filling up. The question is why?

Lack of a federal mandate means that many agencies are not even considering telework options. Agencies must begin telework programs with a specific mission, need, or pilot. However, until telework has strong legislative support, agencies will fail to take the new road. Beyond policy, telework requires personnel, technology, culture, and training commitments to reap its myriad

benefits. Like any program with a return on investment, there are initial costs associated with development.

What Can We Do?

Benjamin Franklin said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." We need to innovate to realize tangible progress, such as doing the following:

- ◆ *Address eligibility.* Offer telework as an opt-out, rather than an opt-in. Require justification from managers on ineligibility.
- ◆ *Address management resistance.* Educate managers and encourage management-specific pilot programs.
- ◆ *Test drive COOP.* Telework is not an antidote to be used in case of emergency. Agencies need to commit to telework up front and embrace it as a part of their standard operating procedure.
- ◆ *Allocate resources.* One full-time, senior-level telework coordinator per agency is critical. Agencies should develop a telework team that includes employees charged with handling their agency's COOP planning and information technology support.

Clearly, government telework adoption has much room for improvement. Organizations must consider telework a standard operating procedure as well as a shift toward a nationwide distributed workforce. Now is the time to put telework into drive.

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Society cannot share a common communication system so long as it is split into warring factions.

—Bertolt Brecht



Forum:
The Next *President's* Management Agenda

Now Is the Time for Collaboration

by Robert J. O'Neill Jr. and Elizabeth K. Kellar

The public tells pollsters that the most important issues facing our nation (other than the war in Iraq) are as follows:

- ◆ Security and safety
- ◆ Jobs
- ◆ Health care
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Long-term economic security (retirement, Social Security, and Medicare).

None of these issues can be tackled without a national strategy. All of them transcend the boundaries of federal, state, and local governments and require the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to work together. Each requires a complex, multidisciplinary approach to policy development and execution.

Economic policies are unlikely to succeed if driven by the federal government alone. In any analysis of the long-term financial implications of current federal tax policy and expenditure requirements, states, regions, and local governments clearly have a vital role to play in financing policy and developing program strategies for most nondefense initiatives.

We need new forums where local, state, and federal leaders openly debate strategies to address national priorities.

State and Local Government Leadership

Leadership from state and local government is needed to test new approaches and to develop solutions that Americans will accept. Already, many state governments are experimenting with new ways to provide health care to uninsured residents, giving a high priority to children's needs. Likewise, state and local governments are seizing the initiative to reduce carbon emissions through new legislation, such as banning idling in urban areas.

To make progress on climate change and sustainability issues, the United States will require a rarely seen collaboration among the levels of government and the private sector. A recent National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report on environmental management, *Taking Environmental Protection to the Next Level: An Assessment of the U.S. Environmental Services Delivery System*, described the traditional regulatory strategies of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the states as a prerequisite to implement changes, but insufficient to deal with today's environmental challenges. Unprecedented dialogue and shared commitment to goals and strategies across 50 states and thousands of local governments are required to achieve significant results.

The wildfires last fall in California remind us of the complexity of our system of emergency response. In that disaster, we took pride in seeing an effective emergency response. The state of California and its local governments have an excellent reputation for emergency preparedness, and they worked well with their federal partners. However, when we consider the response to Katrina, we must acknowledge that our emergency management system has serious weaknesses. Federal, state, and local response and recovery strategies should not be unpredictable and idiosyncratic. Collaboration among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors should be practiced and expected. Open communication and discussion among all of these sectors should be the norm in developing national policy.

Robert J. O'Neill Jr. is executive director of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the membership organization dedicated to creating excellence in local government through professional management. The association's resources and services reach thousands of local, county, and state government professionals, academics, and consultants via its monthly mailings. He can be reached at roneill@ICMA.org. Elizabeth K. Kellar is executive director, Center for State and Local Government Excellence.

Working across Boundaries

One reason we struggle with these issues is that we pay scant attention to the difficulty and the importance of working together and across boundaries. Few forums are available for local, state, and federal leaders to openly debate strategies to address national priorities. To date, we have heard little in the presidential campaign on how the candidates will build the capacity to work on issues that require extensive and sustained collaboration among all levels of government and with the private sector.

Progress in these areas will only be made by restoring the relationships among all the intergovernmental partners and developing the institutional capacity to leverage these relationships to improve outcomes. For Americans to see progress in the areas most important to them, we need a renewed commitment to work together on common goals. The success of the next president's domestic agenda will largely depend on the ability to build support across the intergovernmental system. A full understanding of the delivery system is essential because most major federal programs rely on states and local governments to bring services to our residents.

Plan for Action

It's time for action:

- ◆ Create an Intergovernmental Policy Council modeled after the Domestic Policy Council; staff it to support a consistent dialogue and to develop recommendations and supporting strategies that require intergovernmental and cross-sector execution.
- ◆ Establish a working panel of representatives from the major state and local government organizations to meet quarterly to assess progress on major issues requiring intergovernmental collaboration.
- ◆ Develop an institutional ability (perhaps through NAPA) and metrics to assess the capacity of the intergovernmental system to meet the needs of the American people.

The stakes are high. The patchwork approach of recent years endangers our security as well as our social and economic well being. It is time for honest dialogue and pragmatic solutions.

The Challenge of Managing across Boundaries

by Mark A. Abramson and Alan P. Balutis

Starting in summer 2007, Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group—the firm's global consulting arm—sponsored a series of seminars to bring leading thinkers on public management together with government and industry executives. Seminar discussions ranged from how a new administration might organize the next management improvement initiative to specific management issues, such as performance management, application of new technologies, and managing a blended workforce of contractors and civil servants.

The seminars also focused on which management initiatives set forth by the current administration should be continued by the next president. The participants agreed that the next administration would need to address government's antiquated personnel system, develop new ways to measure and improve performance, and strengthen the acquisition process.

This article focuses on one of the top challenges facing the new administration: managing across boundaries. Many seminar participants observed that government today is in many ways similar to government in the 1950s. Although computers now rest on the desks of government executives, legislators, and their staffs, the executive and legislative branches operate much like they did during most of the twentieth century. Both branches need to dramatically change to meet the anticipated demands and complexity of the twenty-first century. No organization in the federal government today can accomplish its program objectives without increased collaboration internally and with organizations in other parts of government, including Congress and state and local government, as well as the public and nonprofit sectors. Thus, boundary spanning needs to increase.

Government in the twentieth century was characterized by the traditional command-and-control hierarchical bureaucracy. Seminar participants agreed that government must now move to working in networks and collaborating with, not commanding, other organizations. One participant argued that the current hierarchical model of bureaucracy is now obsolete. Technology, such as social networking and collaborative software tools, can serve as enablers to increase collaboration and provide the ability to work across boundaries.

The federal government can't accomplish its program objectives without increased collaboration inside and outside the executive branch.

Between Branches

The participants generally agreed that Congress and the executive branch need to work closer together to develop new approaches to management in government. One example cited was the inability of the executive and legislative branches to agree on new ways to fund multi-agency or government-wide initiatives. Government is still encumbered by a twentieth-century system of accounts, which links funding to specific programs in specific agencies. Thus, funding a government-wide initiative that “spans” accounts and cuts across multiple departments and agencies is difficult. During the Bush administration, traditional budgeting and accounting systems created problems for funding the administration’s e-government initiatives involving multiagency participation. Negotiations between the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and Congress did not succeed in creating new approaches to funding these government-wide boundary-spanning initiatives. The executive branch and Congress also need to cooperate on goal setting and using the framework enacted in the Government Performance and Results Act to enhance communication and oversight between the two branches.

Between Departments

Another challenge for the next administration will be to find new ways for executive branch departments to work across departmental boundaries. During the seminar series, two types of boundary-spanning activities in government were discussed.

The first involves administrative boundary spanning, which includes activities such as agencies sharing services or providing one-stop Web portals. Although the Bush administration made progress in this area through its government-wide enterprise activities and increased the number of government-wide portals, much remains to be done.

The second concerns solving national problems that cut across single agencies. It was often said during the seminars that no national problem could be solved by a

single department or agency. An effective national response to any problem will require agencies working closely together and sharing information and perhaps staff members as well. The creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) was a step toward increasing communication and boundary spanning among government’s numerous intelligence agencies. One ODNI goal is to foster increased networking among intelligence agencies. One participant in the series commented that some agencies in the Department of Homeland Security appear to be working as silos rather than fostering networks both inside and outside of government.

A related theme was the importance of measuring government-wide performance, which goes beyond the performance of individual departments or agencies. Participants saw a need for government to begin to sum individual agency performance and report to the public on government-wide performance. One participant also noted that such information should focus on outcomes rather than the traditional outputs.

Across Governments: Federal, State, and Local

Throughout the seminar series, participants commented on the need for increased interaction between the federal government and state and local governments. As noted, national problems are indeed “national” by definition and require programmatic interventions at all levels of government. No problems today can be solved by the federal government alone. The consensus was that current relationships between levels of government require dramatic rethinking and increased attention by the next administration.

An example of effective boundary spanning across levels of government was the October 2007 fires in California. Unlike the Hurricane Katrina experience, the federal government worked much more effectively with state and local officials than it had done two years previously. With the increased importance of homeland se-

Mark A. Abramson is president, Leadership, Inc. He has served as executive director of the IBM Center for the Business of Government and president, the Council for Excellence in Government. He can be reached at mark.abramson@comcast.net. *Alan P. Balutis* is distinguished fellow and director of the Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group. He served in government for more than 28 years and developed and organized the seminar series described in this article, with the assistance of Mr. Abramson. He can be reached at abalutis@cisco.com.


curity and effective responses to emergencies, the need for greater coordination and closer collaboration with state and local governments will be another major challenge facing the next administration.

Across Sectors: Public, Private, and Nonprofit

Seminar participants also agreed that the federal government needs to increase the number of partnerships with other organizations in the private and nonprofit sectors. This is related to a major theme that evolved during the seminar series: that government was moving toward serving as a manager of networks in addition to providing services by itself. Another participant discussed his vision that the job of the next generation of government executives will be to leverage activities in various sectors to accomplish government goals and objectives.

Government contracting can be viewed as one type of partnership between the public and private sectors. Government contractors and government employees now work side by side with one another in the same office space. Such working relationships are likely to continue throughout the next administration. Thus, government will face the challenge of managing a blended workforce in future years.

Twentieth-century government can be characterized by its command-and-control hierarchy. The challenge for the next administration will be to determine the most effective form and function for twenty-first-century government, which will surely have to employ collaboration and networking to span boundaries.



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Recruiting and Engaging the Federal Workforce



A recent seminar examines employee motivation from three perspectives.

by Bill Trahant

The talk in government these days is about abolishing the General Schedule and replacing it with customized pay-for-performance systems. The General Schedule, however, is unlikely to disappear soon, so what can government executives and federal human capital professionals do to increase employee productivity and organizational performance under the current federal pay rules and performance appraisal guidelines?

That question was the focus of intense discussion at an October 4, 2007, seminar at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, hosted by American University's Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation in conjunction with the Government Consulting Services practice of Watson Wyatt Worldwide. This forum, which brought together government executives and federal human capital professionals from a range of federal departments and agencies, featured presentations by James Perry, chancellor's professor in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University-Bloomington; Toni Dawsey, assistant administrator for human capital management at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and Colleen Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union. The seminar was held because of growing government interest in understanding how to improve individual employee productivity under General Schedule operating rules and in light of recent setbacks in implementing pay for

performance in the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

Public-Service Motivation

The seminar began with a discussion of the ways public-sector employment differs from that in the private sector and how federal agencies can capitalize on job candidates' interest in public service (especially that of first-time job seekers) when recruiting and hiring. "Working in the public sector is different than working in industry, and there are ways to leverage that to advantage in public-sector recruitment practices," noted James Perry, who has spent his professional life investigating what motivates people to pursue careers in the public sector and who has done extensive research on the public-service motivation of job seekers and holders in the United States and other countries.

He said studies show that the work motivations of public employees "are based on a different set of values than one finds in industry or even the nonprofit sector," adding that understanding these motivations and incorporating them into federal recruitment and hiring processes is critical in attracting a new generation of workers to public service. Moreover, he said federal agencies must "make better use of employees' public-service motivations" to stimulate good job performance and employee engagement once individuals are actually on the job.

Perry argued that as government agencies brace for a "retirement tsunami" in the next few years and gear up recruitment and hiring efforts to deal with it, they must do a better job of appealing to job candidates' sense of public service and to other "intrinsic motivators"—such as altruism, the desire to make a difference, and interest in giving back to one's community and country. "This is how you attract highly talented, motivated employees to careers in the federal government," said Perry.

As part of such efforts, agencies need to gauge the suitability of individuals' backgrounds and interests for the agency to which they apply, said Perry. While face-to-face interviews are critical, so too is understanding a job candidate's past activities that reflect public-service motivation. For example, volunteering in the community, giving blood, or helping the poor indicate "other-directed" behaviors that show an inclination to

public-sector service, he said. They also suggest that a person's motivation to seek federal-sector employment is a desire to meaningfully contribute to society, not simply a desire for job security.

Perry said federal managers need to develop a robust profile of the ideal public-sector employee. For example, "Government employees are more likely to volunteer to do civic things than their counterparts in the private sector," he said. "They may also have a propensity to blow the whistle" on illegal or unethical behaviors in organizations. These character traits and others need to be fleshed out as part of the federal recruiting process.

Previewing the nature of public-sector jobs for candidates is also important, said Perry, because it helps them understand the nature of an agency's mission and work before they are hired. Realistic previews promote realistic post-hiring expectations. They can also facilitate the rapid engagement of new hires, shorten the time required to make them fully productive employees, and help them establish a strong, compelling connection between their everyday job and the overall mission and goals of their organization.

Designing an agency's recruitment and hiring processes to adequately screen and vet job candidates for public-sector jobs can be costly, said Perry, but these costs are recouped when the processes reduce downstream re-hiring and retraining expenses and help ensure better job fit, faster employee engagement, and better productivity.

Performance Metrics

Perry next suggested that agencies incorporate public-service behaviors and values as performance metrics in their performance management systems. For example, public-service values such as "concern for the public welfare," "stewardship of public resources," and "responsiveness to taxpayers" could all be used to assess individual job performance against agency goals and promote desired employee job behaviors and personal alignment with the organizational mission, according to Perry.

Such metrics also can be used to forge strong personal bonds between public-sector employees and the organization's mission, especially when employees are given a hand in creating the performance metrics by which their work is judged. "Employee participation in the ap-

Bill Trahant is national practice leader of government consulting services for Watson Wyatt in Arlington, VA. Reach him at William.Trahant@watsonwyatt.com.

praisal process, both through providing input into what is assessed and providing self-assessment of one's performance, sends important signals about social belonging and identity and affirms one's perceptions of being a member of a group that has shared values," said Perry.

Pay for Performance

In criticism of current efforts to promote a pay-for-performance culture in federal agencies today, Perry said he feels it's important to design compensation systems to emphasize long-term job attractiveness to employees and to "avoid performance-related pay that crowds out intrinsic motivations" associated with public service and valuing the work itself. He noted that even private-sector research indicates that pay for performance doesn't always yield desired outcomes (improved performance) and that in the public-service arena, it can actually be detrimental to employee job commitment and motivation.

Paying people on the basis of short-term job performance can be a disincentive to some public-sector employees because they aren't drawn to public-sector jobs for the paycheck, Perry argued. Instead, their motivation is serving the public good or making a difference in the lives of others—not competing with coworkers for rewards based on external motivators. "There is firm evidence that many people who seek jobs in the public sector are motivated by so-called 'other-directed' behavior," he said, not by monetary gain.

Perry noted that in the public sector the subject of pay is important, but that offering public-sector salaries that are competitive with the private sector is more important than imposing external work values (and variable rewards) on individuals who are, in many cases, driven at work by internal motivations and values. "Let's face it, we're not paying enough right now to attract the best and brightest to government. Thus, making pay contingent on short-term performance may not be as important to high performance as ensuring that general pay levels for government jobs are roughly comparable to what's available in the private sector."

Social Significance

Still another step public-sector leaders and managers can take to leverage the public-service motivation of public-sector employees on the job is to increase the perceived social significance of public-sector work, according to Perry. He said that field research shows that stressing job significance and non-task-related values

such as allegiance, teamwork, professionalism, and determination can be powerful motivators to many who work in the public sector. For this reason, he said, more and more organizations are paying attention to the importance of incorporating "pro-social" or principle-based behaviors and values into the design of performance appraisal systems.

The U.S. Marine Corps, for example, uses a system of performance ratings (fitness reports) that includes not only technical proficiency but also measures of personal conduct. A study of government employees meanwhile shows that managers in high-performing work units often develop performance appraisals that measure not only personal goals, but also "goals of principle" centered on attributes such as "honesty, teamwork, commitment to the customer, and being a good steward of resources." Still another study—this one of teachers—found that they "are largely motivated by their ability to see and know they are responsible for improvements in student performance and working collaboratively with peers."

Perry told attendees that an agency can promote the social significance of public-sector work in many ways, such as embedding discussion of public-sector values into formal job training, new employee orientation, mentoring, and in-processing programs and activities. Top agency leaders—through their actions and words—can create a clear line of sight from the top of the organization down to the work unit level by emphasizing how the work of individual employees impacts overall agency and mission accomplishment.

First-Line Supervisors

First-line supervisors can also help communicate the significance of public-sector work to employees and help rank-and-file employees feel their work contributes to the overarching mission and goals of their organization, said Perry. "The frontline supervisor plays a critical translation role in interpreting individual employee motivations and helping align individual employees with larger-gauge team, departmental, and mission goals," he said. Supervisors also play important roles in administering informal rewards to employees that reinforce specific job behaviors.

Notwithstanding that, Perry conceded, in many cases, federal managers lack the necessary communication, managerial, and people skills to help employees relate to and align themselves with larger agency goals and objectives. Moreover, "Public-service jobs often are not

structured in ways that allow employees to see the pro-social impact of their work.” For both reasons, Perry said public-sector jobs should be structured such that employees can see the downstream benefits of their work. To this end, agency leaders should give employees the opportunity to provide input into public policy development and implementation. Identifying the “beneficiaries” of employees’ jobs (their stakeholders, customers, and service recipients), creating opportunities for direct contact between employees and beneficiaries, and providing clear channels for service beneficiary feedback all demonstrate these benefits.

Early Engagement

Perry argued that, if done right, socializing new employees to an agency’s culture and mission—through the actions of supervisors, training, and other activities—can benefit the agency by fostering tight employee alignment with agency goals and mission. The best way is to leverage a new employee’s natural desires to fit into an organization when they first come on board, he said. Recent studies of organizational socialization suggest that “socialization begins within a short period of time of joining an organization, as new members are frequently very eager to learn appropriate behaviors and to ‘fit in.’”

Perry’s other suggestions for capitalizing on public-service motivation during the recruitment and hiring process include developing work systems and processes that enhance employee self-determination and encouraging employee input into goal setting—both of which encourage personal empowerment and job ownership. “Research on goal setting has increasingly emphasized that in complex settings, employee input into setting goals not only encourages workers to find more effective strategies [to do their jobs] but may also energize behavior and increase employees’ perceptions that they can effectively accomplish their goals.”

Perry’s research on how public-sector managers can better leverage public-service motivation in employees will soon be published in a book, *Motivation in Public Management: The Call of Public Service*. The book is coedited by Annie Hondeghem from Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium, and is scheduled for publication in May 2008 by Oxford University Press. It will outline specific tactics and strategies that government managers can use to make interest in public service a centerpiece of their recruitment, retention, and human resource management activities.

NASA Employee Motivation

Like Perry, Toni Dawsey, assistant administrator for human capital management and chief human capital officer at NASA, also had employee public-service motivation on her mind as she spoke to seminar attendees. Dawsey’s job at NASA is to help the agency transform itself for new mission challenges that lie just ahead, including the retirement of the space shuttle in 2010, completion of the International Space Station, and rollout of NASA’s Constellation program, which will develop new space vehicles to explore the Moon, Mars, and beyond.

Addressing all three challenges involves a huge mission shift for NASA—from its current focus on operations (shuttle launches and missions) to one on research and development to implement the Constellation program. The shift depends largely on NASA employees, whose prized technical, scientific, and engineering skills will be critical to all three endeavors.

In the next few years, NASA must retain much of its in-house technical talent to safely execute the remaining shuttle missions. At the same time, it must begin to transition certain shuttle program employees into research and development jobs associated with the Constellation program, recruit more critical-skill workers to fill jobs as part of future Constellation flight operations, and manage targeted attrition efforts across the organization—all this without impairing operations or lowering employee morale.

A team of officials and representatives from various NASA centers of operation is now mapping the skills and competencies of the shuttle workforce to migrate shuttle program employees to Constellation work, phased to correspond to key milestones in all of NASA’s current activities, according to Dawsey. Their work has enormous implications for NASA’s future mission capability, she said.

As the agency’s mission focus shifts, Dawsey wants to keep employee morale and engagement up, in part because employees face job uncertainty and relocation possibilities in some cases and the need for job retraining in others. High workforce morale has always been a hallmark of the NASA work culture, Dawsey said. Thus, she wants to ensure morale and engagement are maintained in a time of critical agency mission transition.

Staying in Touch

NASA is using employee surveys and intensive supervisor-employee communications to keep employees

informed about changing mission and job requirements, to find out what people find meaningful in their work, and to continuously monitor employee concerns during the transition. The agency is also offering special job details and back-to-school opportunities to many NASA line employees so they can update their skills in key technical, scientific, and engineering areas.

At the same time, NASA has taken steps to strengthen its technical and leadership depth. It has developed an organization-wide approach to leadership development to support long-term succession planning and executive development to create a prolific new leadership pipeline to serve the agency's mission needs far into the future. The initiative involves systematic workforce planning and analysis, career path setting, formal agency-wide leadership development programs, formal and informal coaching and mentoring programs, and leadership training.

At the core of NASA's leadership development and workforce reshaping activities is the development of strong career paths. Dawsey told attendees that NASA's efforts to set career paths are intended to

- ◆ assist managers and supervisors in developing talent within the agency and recruiting new talent to meet future mission needs;
- ◆ support the long-range goal of facilitating greater movement of employees across NASA's various centers and different scientific, technical, and engineering disciplines as mission needs dictate; and
- ◆ help employees broaden and strengthen their skills to prepare for potential new work assignments and increasingly higher levels of responsibility.

By setting career paths, developing leaders, coaching, and other activities, many employees will be prepared to easily transition into new positions when new Constellation systems development work comes online, according to Dawsey.

Aggressive Recruiting

Workforce reshaping efforts are also taking place on the recruitment front. Dawsey told seminar attendees that the agency is working hard to attract a new generation of employees and take advantage of strong public interest in NASA as an exciting place to work. "We have hundreds of applications for every science and technology job we have," she said.

To help it vet and recruit the best external job candidates for new and future jobs, NASA is using special hiring flexibilities approved by Congress. These flexibilities include offering enhanced recruitment, relocation, and retention bonuses to critical-skills workers, making expanded use of term appointments, and offering enhanced travel and annual leave benefits to new hires. All these tools are considered vital to filling many mission-critical NASA jobs.

The agency is also vigorously recruiting students. NASA's ten centers are using programs such as the Student Employment Program and Federal Career Intern Program to recruit new hires into the agency. The agency also has cooperative education (co-op) programs in place at many universities and, in many cases, is reaching out to underrepresented population groups to find appropriate job candidates for new NASA jobs.

As NASA transforms itself to prepare for an exciting array of future space missions, the agency's concern with keeping employees motivated is evident in the approach it is taking to restructuring efforts and to reshaping the makeup of its workforce. Dawsey said that keeping employees informed and helping people prepare for new job and challenges (in some cases, to transition out of the agency) are key to ensuring that the agency is able to fulfill its public mission in the years ahead.

Touching the Mission

Is Dawsey worried about NASA retaining (or acquiring) the talent it needs to achieve an ambitious agenda of future space missions? To some extent perhaps, but she quickly adds: "NASA employees are among the most committed in government" largely because the work of the agency is so public and high profile, and because "agency employees have so many individual ways they can personally touch the mission of the agency everyday on the job."

Dawsey's words are backed up by recent hard numbers. NASA recently ranked fourth on the "2007 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" survey, conducted by the Partnership for Public Service (PPS) in conjunction with American University's Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation (ISPPi.) The agency won especially high marks from PPS and ISPPi for

- ◆ fostering teamwork on the job (second of twenty-nine agencies surveyed),
- ◆ offering employees strong training and development opportunities (second),

- ◆ supporting diversity (second),
- ◆ offering performance-based rewards and advancement (second),
- ◆ promoting work/life balance (fourth),
- ◆ displaying effective leadership (second), and
- ◆ providing workers with a good match between employee skills and organizational mission (fourth).

Despite the employees' giving the agency high marks as a place to work, Dawsey said that she and her human capital colleagues aren't resting on their laurels. She said the agency can't afford to be complacent about workforce planning needs today or in the future. Too much is at stake. She and her human capital colleagues remain focused on working with the agency's top leadership to determine NASA's human capital requirements far into the future; attract (and retain) the best scientific, engineering, and technical talent to work in the agency; and build on NASA's strong mission legacy of the last forty years—one of which she said all Americans are proud.

"NASA is filled with highly educated, dedicated employees at all levels who love what they do and are inspired by the challenges and exciting environment," said Dawsey. "Our challenge today is to align our workforce with our new mission, to strengthen the technical and leadership excellence of our employees, and to reshape our workforce to better serve future mission requirements."

Union Perspective

The last speaker to deliver remarks at the seminar was Colleen Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union. Kelley expressed admiration for the way NASA is keeping employees motivated and engaged at work during a time of tremendous mission change at the agency. She went on to say, however, that not all federal agencies—or managers—are doing as good a job of engaging and motivating employees, to the detriment of employee morale and productivity. "Many federal employees today don't feel valued," she said. "In fact, a lot of them feel they're treated like widgets in their organizations." This is a shame, Kelley added, because "federal employees want to see top performers rewarded and also want to see issues of poor performance addressed." But this isn't happening, she says.

Available Rewards

Kelley noted many federal agencies don't use the full complement of General Schedule reward and incentive mechanisms available to them. "There are many things agencies can do to recognize and reward top performers. For example, they can make greater use of Quality Step Increases (QSIs), cash bonuses, repayment of student loans, time-off awards, suggestion awards, and other things." The problem is "few managers know these reward and incentive tools exist. And if they do, they get little support or training in how to apply them with their people." Kelley added that many agencies also fail to fully fund award programs or to make them a significant part of the employee evaluation process.

Reward Inconsistency

Kelley also said that when it comes to rewarding frontline employees for superlative job performance, consistency is lacking across agencies. "It all depends on the individual agency and manager," she said. "Some agencies have award ceremonies where they recognize employees with QSIs or Commissioner Awards. These kinds of awards ceremonies get a lot of visibility within the agency, and are very much respected by employees."

In other cases, however, "agencies give awards to management officials and executives, but not to frontline employees." Or they give people awards in secret or without sufficiently publicizing them to all employees in the agency. "When awards are given to people in secret, whether intentionally or because of a lack of publicity, it sends the signal that the giving of the awards isn't really valued by the manager or agency. It also sends the message to employees that the agency doesn't really want the general employee population to know what it takes to excel in that agency."

Kelley cited examples of two federal agencies where she said performance standards for awards aren't explicitly communicated to employees or the agency's compensation system and performance management system have been disconnected from one another. In both instances, it has led to problems with employee morale and job satisfaction and in one case to a lawsuit charging job discrimination.

Authority, Standards, and Creativity

Kelley noted that in too many cases today, federal managers and supervisors don't have real authority to use money for employee rewards, and, in other cases, re-

wards are given to people without being tied directly to clear, formal job requirements and performance criteria that everyone in an organization can understand. She emphasized that agencies do themselves a disservice when they fail to communicate clear performance standards to employees and to acknowledge employee contributions on the job. “Managers should be proud to give awards to top performing employees [because] it sends a very positive message to all employees about what’s valued on the job.”

Kelley also said federal managers should exercise more creativity in giving employee awards. This would help bolster employee productivity in many agencies. “Agencies could create more opportunities for employees to be detailed to new or different jobs, to higher grade jobs,” or to jobs that make specific use of an employee’s talents, she said. Such awards would do a lot for morale and employee motivation and help with individual career planning. However, such “stretch assignments” are rare in government, she said.

Conclusions

On the basis of the speakers’ seminar remarks, we conclude the following:

- ◆ Federal agencies can leverage existing employee rewards and incentives more effectively and creatively than they are now. In some cases, more effective management training is required to fully acquaint line managers with available reward and recognition options and with the effective range of managerial discretion in using these performance tools.
- ◆ Agencies can be more creative in their use of non-monetary rewards—such as training—to provide incentives to employees and give people practical career development options. NASA is using employee training and leadership development, not only as tools to reshape its workforce, but also to provide incentives and align employees with future mission goals and priorities.
- ◆ Agencies must intentionally include public-service values and motivations into the screening and hiring of future job applicants. Doing so is likely to attract a highly motivated and prequalified pool of job candidates to federal service in the years ahead, which will be critical in replacing aging baby boomers as they retire in large numbers.
- ◆ As agencies hire new employees, they can do more to incorporate public-service values and principles

into new employee orientation and in-processing programs, training programs, and formal and informal coaching of employees—at all levels. As James Perry pointed out, such “socialization” activities—and the values and behaviors they reinforce in new hires—can alter the extent to which they bond and identify with the goals and mission of their agency from the moment they walk in the door. Such efforts also serve to quickly captivate new hires and make them effective and engaged employees.

- ◆ Top government leaders should create a clear line of sight between the mission of their organization and the roles individual employees play in helping the agency achieve it. This engages and motivates employees to perform because they see how their everyday jobs relate to the organization’s overall mission. Careful and deliberate leadership communication with employees can dramatically impact the degree of employee engagement with mission goals.
- ◆ Finally, first-line managers and supervisors can motivate and engage their subordinates. They serve as a vital link between frontline employees and overall mission goals. In large bureaucracies, it’s very easy for average employees to feel their contributions to the organization don’t make much of a difference, especially if their managers don’t work to overcome such perceptions. For that reason, first-line supervisors play a crucial role in bonding individual employees with the goals, values, and ideals of an agency or department. First-line supervisors not only influence how employees view their jobs and identify with the organization, but also reinforce the social significance of public-sector work—the ways that conscientious federal workers contribute to the smooth functioning of our government and to the effective administration and implementation of our laws, statutes, and public regulations.

The General Schedule will be around for the foreseeable future. The insights offered by Perry, Dawsey, and Kelley can be used in better managing federal workers, providing them crucial (often nonmonetary) incentives, and helping them connect and identify with the goals of their organizations. Public-sector employment differs from that in the private sector and calls for management and motivational practices that reflect that distinction.

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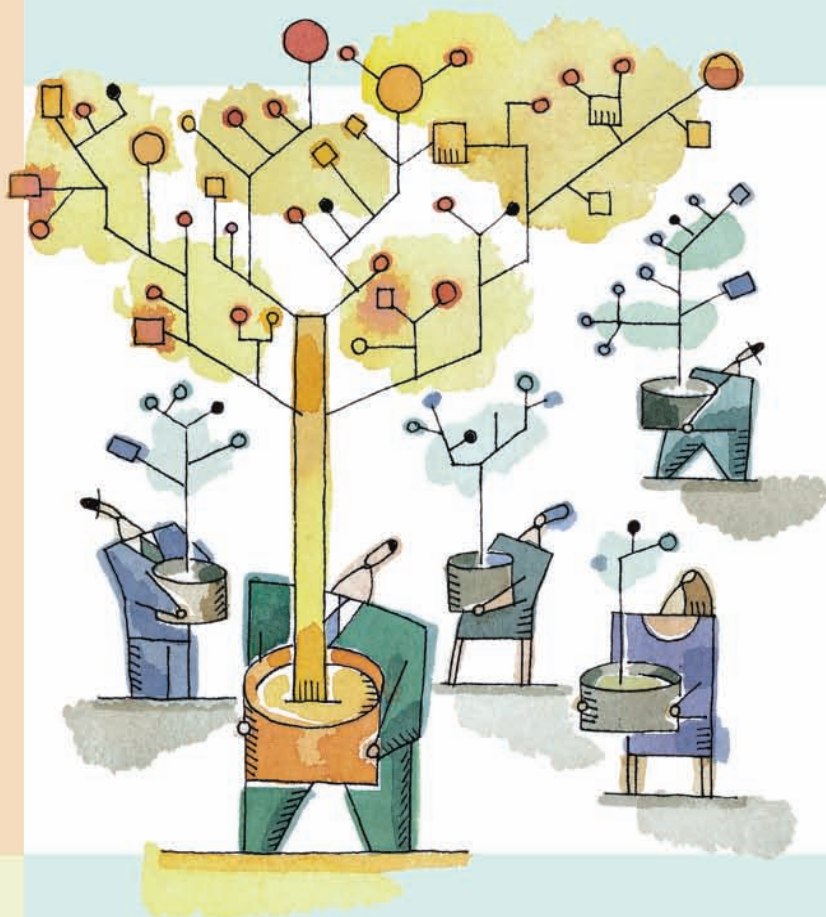
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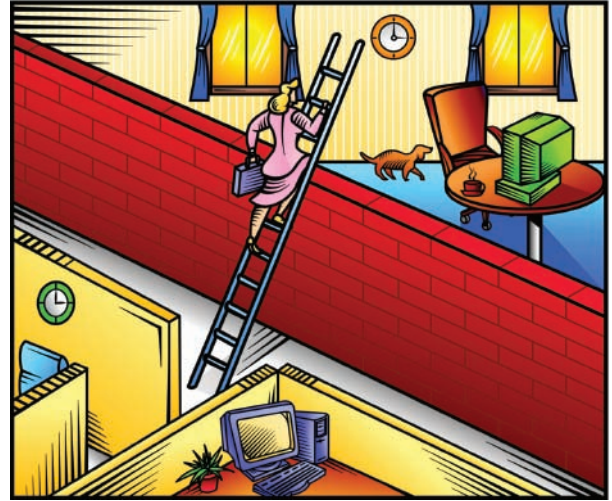
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Telework:



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Successful telework programs feature active top-level leadership, clear policy and guidelines, solid program support, and integration in overall agency planning.

by Stanley Kaczmarczyk

Why and how do some federal telework programs succeed? Eight years as part of the leadership of federal telework at the General Services Administration (GSA) have shown me that when carefully planned and rigorously implemented few, if any, of these programs fail. This article discusses how success in federal telework stems from identifying practical and realistic program expectations, understanding the dynamics and measures of telework, and establishing useful and flexible policies and program design. Also required are implementation guidance, effective tools (including appropriate measures), program support, proactive senior leadership, and culture change.

Performance

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) identified job performance as a key goal of its telework program, established clear policies to encourage maximum use, and bolstered the program with abundant support and aggressive top-level leadership. USPTO now has one of the largest telework programs in the federal government. As of October 2007, 3,609 employees were participating in some form of telework, an impressive 40.7 percent of the total USPTO workforce and 45.7 percent of total eligible employees. Examiners participating in one USPTO pilot telework program showed a productivity increase of 10 percent, with no

difference in the quality of work. In 2003, examiners were so interested that the agency had to create a waiting list for participation in the pilot program. In part because of its use of telework, USPTO has been recognized by *Business Week* magazine as one of the best places in America to launch a career or round one out and by *Families* magazine as one of the best places in the Washington area to work if you have a family.

USPTO positions are amenable to quantitative assessments of productivity, but many federal positions are not; recognizing this is another ingredient for program success. Over the years, research and assessments have shown that successful programs expect job performance simply to be undiminished. Combining this limited expectation with the other expected benefits more than adequately justifies telework implementation. As a result, these programs have consistently reported management satisfaction.

Program Flexibility

While home-based telework is fine for the majority of teleworkers, it does not work for those who have personal or work-related issues that require a setting different from their homes. Possible reasons include the home's not having a broadband Internet connection or suitable work environment, preference for group or collegial atmosphere, or simply needing to avoid distractions at home. To address this issue, Congress and GSA established a pilot project of telework centers in the Washington metropolitan area. These centers, managed by GSA, offer federal and nonfederal workers a convenient and effective telework alternative to working at home.

Center services and amenities include typical workstation and office equipment, Internet access, workspace options ranging from private and semiprivate offices to cubicles, and conference rooms with videoconferencing capability. Currently, the centers are located 16 to 80 miles from downtown Washington. They add the program flexibility needed to make telework an option for those who want to avoid the commute but still need to get out of the house. As a result, telework center users and center directors have been overwhelmingly positive about the added value and effectiveness of the centers as alternative workplaces.

Space Savings

Some successful agency programs—including those at GSA, the Department of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and USPTO—identified facility space savings as a key expected telework benefit. These programs are characterized by aggressive top-level support, solid program design, and clear measures; all reported significant space savings and other successful results.

For example, USPTO's alternative office program, which combines telework and hoteling (reserving workstations at the main office as needed on nontelework days), has saved millions of dollars in avoided rental costs. Some years ago, GSA developed a tool, the Cost-per-Person Model (CPPM), which enables agencies to assess the breakeven point between the cost of additional telework, information technology (IT), and connectivity and the savings from the reduced real-estate footprint.

Recruitment and Retention

Telework can serve as a recruitment and retention tool, a big priority for federal employers as baby boomers start to retire. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) estimates that about 61,700 employees will retire in fiscal year 2008, many more than in previous years. OPM expects 40 percent of the federal workforce to retire between 2006 and 2015. The generation on tap to replace the retirees is a "digital" one that has grown up in the era of computers and mobile technology. They expect a fundamentally different experience in the workplace than their predecessors.

USPTO successfully implemented telework to counteract an employee shortage. In 2002–06, one patent examiner left the USPTO for nearly every two the agency hired. Largely as a result of the hoteling telework program it began in 2006, USPTO has improved its ability to retain qualified workers and expects to save on office space rental costs. USPTO management reported that its most effective retention efforts were those that provide additional compensation to and an enhanced work environment (such as telework) for patent examiners. Examiners who participated in OPM's 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey agreed. Of the 1,136 patent examiners who responded to the survey, 77 percent answered that the availability of a teleworking program was an important or very important reason to stay.

Stanley Kaczmarczyk is the principal deputy associate administrator, Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration. He can be reached at stan.kaczmarczyk@gsa.gov.

Investments and Costs

Although telework has many benefits, cost savings have only recently become one of them, according to agency responses to a GSA survey. An investment of about \$16 million over three years to provide a “basic” teleworker-at-home solution for half the agency’s total staff can be offset by \$36 million in benefits over the same three years through savings in reduced employee absence, real-estate footprint, employee retention, and improved productivity.

Investments in telework support other critical agency-wide objectives, including IT modernization efforts, support of mobile workers, and legislative compliance. Combining telework with the alternative office enables agencies to reduce costs and better use current facilities. Moreover, employing remote alternative work-sites accommodates workers who need to work in a high-security environment or who are adversely affected by base relocation programs. Telework is also a key tool in efforts to prepare for national emergencies such as natural disasters and pandemics.

Emergency Planning, Preparation, and Response

On May 3, 2006, President Bush issued the *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, which outlines the government’s approach for dealing with the threat of pandemic influenza. It states: “All departments and agencies will be responsible for developing pandemic plans that ... ensure that the department or agency will be able to maintain its essential functions and services in the face of significant and sustained absenteeism.” The Department of Health and Human Services, for example, expects an absenteeism rate of up to 40 percent in the middle of a severe pandemic. For most agencies, an excellent way to cope with such absenteeism is to allow employees to work from home.

For telework programs to be effective during an emergency, they must already be in place. As many employees as possible should have telework capability (that is, current telework arrangements, connectivity, and equipment commensurate with their work needs) and enough opportunities to telework to ensure systems have been tested and are known to be functional. This will also ensure that any security concerns can be adequately addressed.

Managing Teleworkers

For a telework program to succeed, managers of teleworkers must use performance-based management—identify and communicate the key performance indicators to teleworkers and then focus on the quality and timeliness of deliverables, rather than hours worked in a rigid schedule. Tasks must be explicitly defined and expectations must be properly set at the beginning of each project, and a system must be in place for teleworkers to report their progress. However, teleworkers should not be held to higher expectations or subjected to onerous reporting requirements compared with workers in the main office.

Implementing a new work management practice requires culture change. As Howard Risher explains in the fall 2007 issue of *The Public Manager*, culture is often the most important consideration in gaining acceptance for new policies and work management practices. “The system or process for evaluating employee performance by itself is not enough to define the culture. ... [T]he continued reinforcement of performance by a multiplicity of practices is responsible for creating a performance culture.”

Top-Level Support

A federal telework program will never succeed without strong and consistent top-level management support. A good example is the recently issued challenge by GSA administrator, Lurita Doan, who is pushing the agency to lead by example and increase the number of eligible employees participating in telework. The goal is to have 50 percent of eligible GSA employees teleworking at least one day per week by the end of calendar year 2010. She has also set interim goals of 20 percent by the end of calendar year 2008 and 40 percent by the end of calendar year 2009. Occasional and situational telework beyond those numbers is also being encouraged. GSA participation in telework is already more than twice the federal rate. (The administrator recently spent the day working at one of the GSA-sponsored telework centers and announced plans to continue teleworking every month.)

Leading by example and before any legislative requirement, GSA has also appointed a *telework managing officer*, or champion. Furthermore, to streamline bill-paying procedures and thereby increase incentives for GSA organizations to utilize telework centers, the administrator is creating a central fund set aside for telework center user fees. Managers can approve employee use of a telework center and simply send a request to the central

fund instead of having the telework center user fees taken from the unit's budget.

Administrator Doan has made it clear that these efforts are the next steps in using telework to its fullest advantage to accomplish a wide range of GSA work, which includes encouraging other agencies to challenge themselves to maximize telework use and supporting their efforts through GSA's Federal Acquisition Service and Public Buildings Service offerings. She says that GSA's

Workplace Solutions can be an effective tool for improving agencies' telework participation.

GSA Resources

GSA has a number of resources to help federal managers and agencies implement or improve telework programs, from policy guidelines to promotion materials (see box). Most of these resources are available at Telework.gov, a site jointly maintained by GSA and OPM.

Telework centers
Fourteen centers are located 16 to 80 miles from downtown Washington. These centers, managed by GSA, offer federal and nonfederal workers a convenient and effective telework alternative to working at home. The services and amenities available include typical workstation and office equipment, Internet access, workspace options ranging from private and semiprivate offices to cubicles, and conference rooms with videoconferencing capability.
New promotion materials and poster
Agency telework coordinators can find several new publications and a telework centers poster at www.gsa.gov/teleworklibrary under "Telework Promotion Materials" and "Telework Centers Resource Materials."
Interactive promotion video for DC area
This is the first interactive Flash video ever posted on GSA's Web site. It summarizes the benefits of telework and allows Washington-based viewers to find a telework center near them and contact their agency telework coordinator. It can be viewed at www.gsa.gov/teleworkvideo . A looping file of the video is also available for use in making presentations and staffing exhibits.
"4 Easy Steps to Register and Start Using a Telework Center"
The registration process is now stated in "4 Easy Steps" with interactive Web site links. These may be found just below the video at www.gsa.gov/teleworkvideo and in a series of new publications now offered at www.gsa.gov/teleworklibrary .
Interactive map of telework centers in DC area
Web site visitors may now locate a center and see what it looks like by just clicking the link at "Easy Step" number 2. Just scroll to a center location to view it or click it to find the exact address and rate.
"Guidelines for Alternative Workplace Arrangements"
Federal Management Regulation (FMR) Bulletin 2006-B3 establishes policy guidelines for agencies implementing and operating alternative workplace arrangements in the federal sector. This first-of-its-kind policy document helps agencies resolve commonly encountered telework implementation issues, such as the provision of workplace equipment to teleworkers and the payment of utility costs for alternative worksites.
"Information Technology and Telecommunications Guidelines for Federal Telework and Other Alternative Workplace Arrangement Programs"
FMR Bulletin 2007-B1—which integrates guidance from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, and GSA—provides telework technology and security information in a consolidated, easy-to-read format that covers technology topics such as basic equipment, telecommunications, security, privacy, training, and support.
<i>Analysis of Home-Based Telework Technology Barriers</i>
Based on survey and other information from agency chief information officers, managers, teleworkers, telework coordinators, and others involved in telework programs, this 2002 study found that no IT issue is a barrier to the growth of telework and solutions are available to address the perceived barriers.
<i>Telework Technology Cost Study</i>
This 2006 study estimates the investment levels needed to modernize agency IT infrastructures to support a large-scale telework program, assesses the financial and nonfinancial benefits of these enhancements (due to telework and other sources), and identifies steps agencies can take to expand IT support for their telework programs.
CPPM
This Excel-based tool enables users to benchmark and compute the cost per person for workspace, IT, telecommunications, telework, and other alternative work environments. It can also calculate potential cost savings for different workspace scenarios. A copy of the CPPM can be requested online at www.gsa.gov/cppm .

Conclusion

Effective telework programs are being implemented by federal agencies. These programs are cost-effective and significantly reduce traffic, improve air quality, and reduce the dependence on foreign sources of oil. They also provide additional value in the areas of continuity, recruitment and retention, and quality of life for our federal workforce. The ingredients of successful programs include proactive top-level leadership, clear policy mandates and guidelines, solid program support and integration of telework into overall agency planning, utilization of telework applications and recommended practices, and high-visibility program promotion.

This article covers the basics of successful federal telework programs. Managers should approve telework where it makes sense, not agonize over cases where it doesn't, and move forward. They should plan a sensible, achievable program (but not be afraid to set stretch goals), learn from mistakes and make the necessary adjustments, and push on. They need to trust their employees and manage by results, and they will find that the work will continue to get done.

Endless hand-wringing and hypothesizing—trying to satisfy every qualm and anticipate every problem before beginning implementation—do not work. Overly cautious federal managers who excessively analyze and

procrastinate should consider whether they are ready for the next phase in their professional lives. Technological, cultural, and demographic changes have already driven the workplace into a brave new world of flexibility and virtuality, and managers cannot effectively run a twenty-first-century workplace with twentieth-century skills.

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Speech and reason

are the characteristics, the glory, and the happiness of man. These are the pillars which support the fair fabric of eloquence; the foundation, upon which is erected the most magnificent edifice, that genius could design, or art construct. To cultivate eloquence, then, is to improve the noblest faculties of our nature, the richest talents with which we are entrusted. A more convincing proof of the dignity and importance of our subject need not, cannot be advanced.

The benevolent design and the beneficial effects of eloquence, evince its great superiority over every other art, which ever exercised the ingenuity of man. To instruct, to persuade, to please; these are its objects. To scatter the clouds of ignorance and error from the atmosphere of reason; to remove the film of prejudice from the mental eye; and thus to irradiate the benighted mind with the cheering beams of truth, is at once the business and the glory of eloquence.

To promote the innocent and refined pleasures of the fancy and intellect; to strip the monster vice of all his borrowed charms, and expose to view his native deformity; to display the resistless attractions of virtue; and, in one word, to rouse to action all the latent energies of man, in the proper and ardent pursuit of the great end of his existence, is the orator's pleasing, benevolent, sublime employment.

Nor let it be objected, that eloquence sometimes impedes the course of justice, and screens the guilty from the punishment due to their crimes. Is there any thing which is not obnoxious to abuse? Even the benign reign of the Prince of Peace has been made the unwilling instrument of the greatest calamities ever experienced by man. The greater the benefits which naturally result from any thing, the more pernicious are its effects, when diverted from its proper course. This objection to eloquence is therefore its highest eulogium.

—Caleb Bingham, extract from an "Oration on Eloquence"



FEMA, Katrina, and Operations Research

Better operations management would have helped FEMA in preparedness and response work before Hurricane Katrina—and still could now.

by Richard Sylves

In the wake of the poor government response to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster, many questions have been asked about why the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), along with a host of other federal, state, and local emergency management agencies, performed so ineffectively. What went wrong? What is the future of the agency? How can a recurrence of the Katrina debacle be prevented? This article explores whether FEMA and other disaster management agencies may have overlooked the importance of “operations research” and “operations management” (OM) in preparedness and response work before Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005.

Many investigations followed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in late 2005 through 2006. Communications problems were alleged to be a factor. Poor leadership of FEMA was another claim. Failures of intergovernmental relations, particularly between the president and the governor of Louisiana, were also put forward.

The congressional report, *Failure of Initiative*, constantly refers to FEMA’s problems in maintaining “situational awareness.” Might it be that FEMA, when it needed to function as a “machine bureaucracy” in the interest of accelerated response to public needs created by the Katrina catastrophe, did not employ enough managers with the requisite OM skill sets needed for such circumstances? Might it also be that FEMA officials were not prepared to make predisaster arrangements

with private contractors and nonprofit organizations on the basis of sound OM principles?

“Operations managers” possess skills and abilities that could help deliver smoother, faster, and more efficient disaster relief.

FEMA and Katrina

Once Hurricane Katrina made landfall along the Gulf Coast, FEMA faced a disaster of catastrophic proportions. When the levees in New Orleans collapsed, a second catastrophe compounded the problem. Some allege that FEMA simply was not ready for a disaster of Katrina’s complexity and magnitude. James Miskel argues that FEMA is capable of handling routine disasters but not catastrophic ones. He contends that no national government agency, regardless of state and local help, could be expected to manage a catastrophe, and he sees Katrina as a catastrophe. Confirming or refuting Miskel’s claim is difficult because identifying the threshold that separates “routine” from “catastrophic” disasters is problematic.

After Katrina struck, tens of thousands of people were displaced from their homes, a thousand more were dead, and many needed rescue. FEMA found itself in the national spotlight. The agency, working under its new and largely untested *National Response Plan* (NRP), could not provide enough relief fast enough for all of the people in need. Examples of FEMA bungling were widespread, many recounted in Douglas Brinkley’s extraordinary book *The Great Deluge*. Communications between FEMA and state and local authorities were inadequate. A major political “blame game” ensued as news media people and a host of elected government officials sought to identify who was responsible for the slowness and deficiencies in government emergency response.

In mid-September 2005, FEMA Director Michael D. Brown resigned from his position, helping to absorb or deflect considerable blame directed at the Bush administration. The reasons for the inadequate intergov-

ernmental response to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath are many, so laying the blame on one or a handful of government officials is shortsighted. The system by which relief is dispensed in a catastrophic disaster is a major part of the problem.

Operations Management

OM is the part of the business world that focuses on the “process” a firm uses to provide a product or service to the consumer. At its most basic, it is the transformation process that takes raw materials, labor, and capital and turns them into final products or services, adding value for the customer. The goal of OM is to produce a product or a service in the most efficient way.

People like Henry Ford and Eli Whitney conceived and then applied their ideas to a working environment in which efficiency was given primacy. The assembly line and cotton gin are examples of OM thinking. These figures and many others throughout history were simply looking for the cheapest and most efficient way to produce a product.

Although people like Ford and Whitney were not educated in the field of OM, their approaches were perfectly consistent with it. In the early part of the twentieth century, the field began to flourish. OM is consistent with the scientific management approach, widely popular in public administration and the corporate world from the 1920s to the 1950s. The bureaucratic model associated with scientific management has a host of drawbacks, but operations research and management should not be abandoned. In the mid-1900s many in U.S. universities were drawn to the precision, logic, and functionality of operations research.

OM promotes skill sets that apply to many business fields. Inherent is the need to know how to run a business that produces optimal outputs. OM asks managers to gauge capacity planning, which means finding out how much your firm can actually produce and then planning to meet the demand of the consumer. OM also stresses the appropriate management of inventories. Does the firm possess sufficient inventory such that unexpected increases in demand will not cause product shortages or price hikes? Another OM skill set involves scheduling. Is everything where it needs to be at the right time in order to ensure an efficient process? Prepositioning commodities needed in the wake of a disaster is not a one-time task. FEMA, using OM principles, needs to become adroit and dynamic in identifying op-

Richard Sylves is professor of political science and international relations and senior policy fellow of the Center on Energy and Environmental Policy at the University of Delaware. He was an appointed member of the National Academy of Science Disasters Roundtable in 2002–05 and coedited (with W. Waugh) Cities and Disaster (1991) and Disaster Management in the U.S. and Canada (1996). He wrote The Nuclear Oracles: A Political History of the General Advisory Commission of the AEC (1986) and has done extensive research and writing on presidential declarations of disaster (www.peripresdecusa.org). He can be contacted at sylves@udel.edu.

timal locations and in monitoring available commodity inventories, particularly as they are drawn down by the big and small disaster responses they supply.

In the same sense that Amazon.com strategically locates product warehouses and shipping facilities around the nation and so is able to deliver products in an automated way (computerization, Internet use, and bar-coding, etc.) with a quick turnaround, so too should FEMA engage in commodity shipment planning. State and local emergency managers, as well as disaster victims and non-profits active in disasters, should be free to direct disaster relief requests into a system that is capable of performing at least as responsively as Amazon.com.

OM also asks managers to engage in forecasting, the skill to foresee how much will be demanded in the future. Facilities location is another related concern: managers need to situate the firm's facilities where transportation costs are minimized. Finally, there is quality assurance, where an operations manager is taught to ensure products are of the quality demanded. These skills are commonly necessary in the business world, and they could be incorporated into the field of government disaster management.

FEMA and Private Business

FEMA, though a government agency, has much in common with a private business. Both provide services or products, and both face a demand curve that varies. Ironically, FEMA relies on a host of contractors to furnish disaster relief. Many of these firms are themselves for-profit private-sector businesses.

A business provides either a product or service to a consumer. In many respects, FEMA provides, either directly or indirectly, services and products to "consumers." Former FEMA Director James Lee Witt used to tout the agency's success in "customer satisfaction." In this vein, FEMA provides disaster relief and funding to people living in areas devastated by disaster, information to disaster victims, a system for requesting certain forms of aid, and in-kind commodities—usually through various contractors and suppliers or through government-stored commodities.

Like a business, the demand for FEMA's services and commodities varies daily. When the president declares a major disaster in a state and its affected counties, the demand for FEMA's services and commodities increases in that locale. Conversely, FEMA does not need to provide as many services or commodities in locales not declared disasters.

From 1953 to 2007, the president declared almost 1,700 disasters, and from 1974 to 2007, almost 300 emergencies. Mapping the location and frequency of such declarations, identifying the type of disaster agent involved, and modeling and projecting the recurrence of many of them are all possible. Susan Cutter's book *American Hazardscapes* and the Public Entity Risk Institute's presidential disaster declaration Web site (developed by the author) provide location information about federally declared disasters in the United States. Although seemingly simplistic, if companies such as Lowe's, Home Depot, and McDonald's can model where customer demand is for their products and configure production, supply, and retail operations accordingly, FEMA could do the same.

Much was made of FedEx and UPS carrier business effectiveness as a model for how FEMA should have operated after Hurricane Katrina. Although the comparison is unfair in many respects, FEMA could benefit from emulating the OM traits of those businesses and others that depend on tightly coupled, highly reliable services. The excuse that disasters are too infrequent to be predicted or anticipated is not wholly valid.

Simply achieving more "situational awareness" by adding more video capacity and network communications to address future Katrina-scale catastrophes is not the total solution to better disaster relief dispensation. It's what disaster managers actually do with the added information that counts.

FEMA contracts out a considerable share of its disaster relief work. How many of these firms engage in OM for disaster relief? To what degree do FEMA contract managers even know they should demand this in their proposal solicitations? In the wake of the Katrina disaster, FEMA issued new contracts to augment old ones. Emergency contracts were issued for technical assistance for critically needed services such as setting up disaster recovery centers, hauling and installing temporary housing, and other logistical and facilities management needs in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in early September. The criteria for contract awards are varied and complex, but rebid or new contracts should consider a firm's OM expertise among the other factors for award.

OM in FEMA

All organizations have an inventory of equipment, including the people employed and actual equipment, such as computers, food items, and blankets. Operations managers have acquired skills that allow them to recog-

nize the inventory items, quantities, and locations needed, while seeking to minimize costs. Consider the problem of vaccines needed to address the threat of pandemic disease. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's NRP states, "Shortages of available supplies of preventive and therapeutic pharmaceuticals and qualified medical personnel to administer available prophylaxis are likely." Problems like these can be solved; personnel with OM backgrounds can address them.

Arguably, OM approaches to disaster management would help FEMA reduce waste and trim the costs of disaster for the national taxpayer. In disaster mitigation programs, such as those involving buyout or relocation decisions, operations managers could assist in decision making, particularly for planners facilitating resettlement.

Operations managers can help FEMA in many other ways, providing leadership, organization, and other skills. Some personnel within FEMA have business backgrounds, and some have experience in OM, but a great many do not. People with OM expertise could help improve FEMA's sorely tested tele-registration system of applicant assistance. They could tutor FEMA contracting officers in acquisition efforts to solicit bids from and make awards to vendors that incorporate OM tenets into these arrangements.

Conclusion

OM is a field FEMA officials should consider in their hiring practices. People with expertise in this field possess skills in leadership, organization, and inventory management. Any evaluation of FEMA's performance in disaster relief, whether in Hurricane Katrina or any other disaster, should gauge its facility in the use of OM principles. This could improve predisaster preparedness and postdisaster response. People with political and generalist backgrounds are still needed in FEMA, but the agency would be wise to recruit more managers with operations research education and experience.

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Federal Contracting for Food and Refreshments

by Daniel Hall

Young contracting professionals need to know how to ensure fair and reasonable pricing when negotiating with the meeting industry.

Contracting professionals must ensure that the federal government receives the best value for the taxpayer dollar while following acquisition regulations during procurement and contract management. This article reflects on the legal regimen of the procurement of food and beverages, with emphasis on conferences. It also discusses the state of the meeting industry and how this can influence rates, as well as negotiation techniques to ensure fair and reasonable pricing.

Current Demographic Challenge

Numerous articles and surveys have illustrated that those in the contracting profession suffer lopsided demographics. In 2007, the latest survey from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy showed that the acquisition workforce—like the rest of the federal government—is aging, and a wave of retirements will take place in the near future. Other survey results include the following:

- ◆ Respondents average between 51 and 55 years old, eligible to retire in the next 10 years.
- ◆ Most are not supervisors and hold a bachelor's degree.
- ◆ Typical respondents are grade 12 or 13.

Without a large influx of new contracting professionals, federal government contract processes could be severely impaired as the number and complexity of procurements increase. From 1991 to 2005, the number of contracting officers declined from thirty-seven thousand to twenty-eight thousand while procurement spending increased from \$150 billion to \$350 billion.

Some agencies, aware of the potential shortage, are taking steps. Intern programs, such as the Department of the Interior's government-wide acquisition management intern program, are making a difference in reversing the historical trend of decline in this field. Fiscal year 2005 saw a net increase of 653, according to the General Services Administration, and the number of those eligible to retire fell to 13 percent.

However, an estimated 32 percent of contracting officers will be eligible to retire in 2010 and an astounding 54 percent in 2015. The large number soon eligible to retire and the marked increase in those less experienced give the field a lopsided demographic. Those in the middle of their career are woefully few. Young professionals, therefore, have an opportunity to replace those who are retiring and become leaders in the contracting field. To do so, they must quickly garner an institutional education, learning from others in the field to avoid the gaps in knowledge that will cost the taxpayer.

Rules of the Road

The Federal Travel Regulation defines light refreshments as coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, and muffins. As the provision of these items is a commercial practice, a government-sponsored conference should not be treated differently. In the federal government, food and refreshments cannot be purchased with appropriated funds. The rationale behind such a rule is elementary—the government should not be expected to cover personal expenses of employees. The cost of meals should be borne by the individual as a general rule. This rule has several exceptions, each of which narrowly focuses on an aspect beyond the normal duties of employees. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) provides the basis of authority for the use of appropriated funds.

Award Ceremonies

One of the most common exceptions is having food and refreshments as part of a reception during an awards ceremony. The Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act permits such ceremonies and necessary expenses to recognize employees who have made contributions to the government. Certain things—such as refreshments—might be appropriate as part of a ceremonial function. The threshold question is whether the agency determines that refreshments would materially enhance the effectiveness of an awards ceremony.

A question also remains on how inclusive the exception is. Will time and place be a consideration in the GAO decision as it is in some other exceptions? If GAO is to remain consistent in regard to the policy ramifications of such a large exception, further refinement is necessary. Otherwise, the exception is open to abuse.

Employee Training

Under the Government Employees Training Act (GETA), agencies are authorized to pay necessary expenses for training—defined as directly related to the performance of official duties for the government. If necessary to achieve the objective of the training, payment for light refreshments is permitted. Registration fees are often required for such training. The price of food and light refreshments, if included in the registration fee and inseparable, is permitted by use of this exception. Even if food or light refreshments are not included in the registration fee, GETA permits payment of meals served if it is incidental to the meeting attendance, the attendance at the meal is necessary for the full participation, and the employee would miss important events such as speeches or lectures.

If the event meets this definition, expenses for refreshments generally are permitted. In the past, GAO has been strict on the use of this exception, actually denying the expenses if the event appears to be, in actuality, a conference with no training aspect. GAO appears to realize that the provision of light refreshments is necessary at employee training. The breadth of the exception is wide, perhaps to the point of permitted abuse. However, if the true purpose is training related to the jobs of the employees attending in a nontravel status, meals will be permitted subject to the limitations mentioned.

Daniel Hall is a contracting officer with the Department of the Interior's National Business Center. As a certified federal contracts manager, he negotiates and drafts contracts with the private sector on a variety of matters.

Conferences

GAO defines a conference as “[a] meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term ‘conference’ also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.” As the number of conferences grows, so does the importance of correctly interpreting GAO decisions on the appropriateness of serving food and refreshments at such events. Many agencies use conferences to facilitate communication and exchange ideas, and they are increasing in popularity as effective, efficient means to reach the maximum amount of people and transmit new approaches or practices. GAO distinguishes between conferences on the basis of setting and purpose.

Government-sponsored conferences are meetings that benefit employees and focus on a specific topic or field, which may be of interest to multiple agencies or even nongovernmental participants. In these instances, asking whether the food and refreshments permit the full benefit of the conference for the attendees is necessary. If the answer is yes, the agency may serve food and refreshments for the employees. GAO has ruled that, although not specifically permitted, light refreshments are subsistence and therefore appropriated funds can be used to pay for them. These refreshments must either be an inseparable part of the attendance fee or necessary to obtain the full benefit of the conference. However, this is only if the individual is in travel status. The employees are also required to reduce the per diem amount for the meals and refreshments served. When not in travel status, GETA permits agencies to pay for necessary expenses at duty stations.

The earlier decisions did not address whether private individuals could attend these events. In a recent decision, GAO addresses the point of nongovernment attendees. Meals and refreshments at a government-sponsored conference that includes private citizens are appropriate if they (1) are incidental, (2) enable full participation, and (3) are part of the formal conference and events happen separately from the meal and refreshment service. The test of whether the meals and refreshments are incidental is whether the main purpose of attending is to gain knowledge and expose oneself to the material being discussed at the conference or whether attendance is merely to partake in the meals and refreshments served.

From the decisions, it appears as though an objective test is used to determine the appropriateness of meals

and refreshments, that is, from a reasonable person’s perspective, was the attendance used to facilitate knowledge or to merely provide refreshments? Finally, GAO determined that the conference must not concern internal, day-to-day operational activities.

Attendance of government personnel at private-sector or academic conferences is gaining in popularity. A two-part test is used to determine whether food and light refreshments are permissible for reimbursement:

1. Appropriated funds are permitted if the light refreshments are included as a nonseparable part of the registration fee.
2. The meals or refreshments must be incidental to the purpose of the conference or meeting. If the cost of the meals or light refreshments is separable, the meals must be provided so that participants do not miss formal discussions or speeches that would take away from full participation.

GAO decisions regarding meals and light refreshments serve as a guide. As new situations develop, decisions are added that can clarify the criteria that should be used in determining the suitability of using appropriated funds. As conferences grow in popularity along with government and private-sector collaboration, new decisions will be forthcoming.

Emergencies

In the wake of emergency situations in the past few years—from Hurricanes Rita and Katrina to the recurring wildfires that plague the drought-ridden West—employees of the federal government are often called upon to work in extreme circumstances. Even under unusual working situations, the provision of food and refreshments is not permissible, including working after hours and where private business offers the only source of food. However, GAO does seem to permit it if the emergency is severe or extreme such as a blizzard or excessive time beyond normal working hours. Food and light refreshments appear to be authorized in life-threatening or catastrophic occurrences, but not for the mere convenience of employees.

Cultural Awareness Events

The federal government has an interest in promoting intercultural awareness, especially as the American workplace becomes increasingly diverse, and GAO provides an exception to support intercultural exchanges.

The exception is limited and draws a distinction between the permitted serving of food and refreshments as samples and the provision of entertainment, which is not permitted. Whether food is permitted at such a function depends on some fundamental questions:

- ◆ Is the food part of a formal program intended by the agency to advance Equal Employment Opportunity objectives and to make the audience aware of the cultural or ethnic history being celebrated?
- ◆ If so, does the food provided constitute a meal, or is it a sample of the food of the culture offered as part of a larger program to serve an educational function?

Factors to be considered include the time of the event, the meal courses presented, and whether employees were advised to make their own arrangements for lunch.

Industry Conference Trends

Several trends may influence hotels and conference managers and thus federal employees when contracting for their services. Government employees can expect to pay more and find negotiating increasingly difficult. However, the industry is cyclical in nature, and 2008 may see an increase in the supply. The consolidation of hotel groups also affects the negotiation. With fewer choices, hotels have the upper hand when dealing with conferences.

Flat rate fees are becoming increasingly common in the resort industry. Ranging from \$10 to \$20, they cover expenses such as phone calls, faxes, and fitness center usage. Some resorts will roll fees into the room rate to keep from surprising the guests with extra charges. If so, it must be clearly stated in the contract.

Negotiators can use some techniques to mitigate the effect. The larger the number of guests is, the better for negotiating. Room rates are the greatest profit center, followed by food and beverage. Also, attendees tend to use other profit centers such as golf, spa, and retail. Therefore, hotels are more interested in the number of guests. Even in the current hotel-preferred market, these points will enable the government negotiator to reach a fair price.

Negotiation

The issues of the ability to serve food and light refreshments are increasingly tied to conferences at resorts and hotels, often mimicking the private sector. The ne-

gotiation with hotels and resorts regarding conferences and the purchase of light refreshments requires knowledge of the marketplace standards. The Federal Acquisition Regulation, Part 12, permits the use of industry standards when acquiring commercial items or services. In this regard, the government is obtaining commercial services on par with those of many other industries that find benefit in having meetings to exchange ideas and practices.

Contracting officers are, by nature, negotiators. Whether from formal training or on-the-job experience, they are expected to obtain fair and reasonable pricing from commercial vendors. A renowned book, *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury, is a good source for learning why and how to negotiate and offers solid examples of negotiating principles to achieve results. Objective, commercial standards are necessary for the purpose of negotiating with hotels or resorts for services. Two valuable standards apply in this situation—market value and precedent.

The market value of the conference can be determined by evaluating similar venues and conferences of the same scope and size. Limiting the resorts or hotels to the same geographic location, capacity, and amenities is key. Has the price of food risen lately? Is the location in a key vacation area during the height of the tourist season? Is the area of historic interest? Due to the nature of some conferences, such factors may be difficult to compensate, but keeping in mind their influence on pricing is vital. Having hard documentation of the pricing of similar venues will dramatically improve results for the contracting officer. For hotels or resorts, obtaining that information in way that simplifies comparison is needed. Price lists and à la carte pricing rather than bundled packages will help the contracting officer compare prices.

Another standard acquisition professionals should use in their negotiations is precedent. Items the government bought previously from the resort or similar venue can be examples of what is fair and reasonable, as are price lists and advertisements available from the hotel. Several magazines, such as *Meetings West* and *Elite Meetings*, are dedicated to conferences and can help determine commercial trends and practices. Keeping abreast of the market is an important aspect of the contracting officer's responsibilities.

Web-Based Approach

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as part of its strategic sourcing initiative, has developed an innovative approach to event management. Gone are the days of tedious negotiation over food and beverage, cancellation clauses, and room rates. Using a performance-based approach, HHS developed blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) with four event management vendors that allow customers to plan services ranging from hotel accommodations and attendee travel to food and beverages.

This comprehensive solution applies to a constant issue for acquisition professionals. The most innovative portion is the fact that ordering is done via a Web portal. Everything is completed online. Each vendor has a specially designed site allowing government employees to register, plan, and price the needed arrangements. Not only does this arrangement save time, but the cost is about 14 percent lower than that in the current HHS contracts.

However, having a private contractor perform the functions of government employees is laced with issues. One is that meals are included with the event management BPA. Fiscal law clearly states that an agency cannot require a contractor to perform acts that the agency itself is not permitted to perform. Therefore, an agency

must have in place a procedure to explicitly permit meals at an event before engaging in such a BPA.

Conclusion

This article encourages young procurement professionals to be vigilant regarding contracts that include the purchase of food and light refreshments with hotels and resorts for the use of conferences. The financial and appropriations laws are explicit regarding having food and beverages at these events. Using the negotiation techniques described can help the contracting professional obtain a fair and reasonable price despite the near universal increase in room rates and the use of service fees. Innovative approaches, such as a Web-based BPA, if used properly, can drive down administrative costs and create a solution to a historically vexing problem.

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Enhanced thinking ability yields more effective decision making, improved problem solving, better individual and group performance evaluations, and higher morale.

Better Thinking: An Asset in Any Organization

by John N. Mangieri

For the past decade, I have been on a mission: to furnish government leaders with important data and content about an element crucial to their success—the ability to think effectively, critically, and creatively. Enhanced thinking ability is a skill regularly exhibited by outstanding leaders, in the United States and abroad, working in government, business, education, and health care.

Unfortunately, few government professionals are aware of the relationship between enhanced thinking proficiency and leadership performance. As a consequence, these leaders have no objective basis upon which to judge their own and others' abilities relative to reaching sound and timely decisions, solving problems efficiently and correctly, responding positively to change, and thinking creatively.

About 93 percent of the professional workforce has never had their thinking skills assessed, and 87 percent have never been taught the cognitive processes needed for critical or creative thinking to occur at high levels of performance.

Learning to Think Critically

Most organizations have done little or nothing to develop such skills. Less than 5 percent of government-sponsored training programs have offered any thinking enhancement courses to their workforce. The failure to offer such programs ex-

tends to the organization's leaders, which is puzzling because enhanced thinking skills have been consistently identified in research studies as a significant competency of the world's best executives.

If most leaders and professional personnel have not learned critical or creative thinking skills in elementary or secondary schools, institutions of higher education, or organizational sponsored training programs, how then have they formed their present thinking processes? Research has found that without instruction, the patterns of thinking used by the majority of educated adults were developed before the age of 12. Unless targeted actions are initiated to alter them, these processes will not change in adulthood. Thus, in this fast-paced, technologically based, and internationally competitive climate where people must respond quickly and accurately to emerging situations, the typical governmental organization has a large percentage of professionals who have never been taught how to think optimally. At a time when knowledge is increasing more than 15 percent each year, these individuals are using patterns of thinking developed during childhood—a scary proposition.

What then is the "state of the union" relative to the abilities of governmental leaders, the majority of whom have never been taught how to think? In studies involving persons who hold such

positions, standardized thinking assessments have found that approximately 8 percent were highly proficient in thinking ability. Thus far, this discussion has focused only on the relationship between a lack of thinking knowledge and individuals. As we know, organizations comprise individuals, so what has been the impact on the units in which they work as this cumulative lack of thinking knowledge “plays itself out.”

Organizational Decision Making

IBM interviewed 200 U.S. managers as part of an international survey to gather information on how decision making occurs within organizations. Some of the key findings of this research were that a mere 32 percent of participants felt they were thorough when making decisions, only 8 percent felt they were creative when making decisions, 35 percent were aware of colleagues continuing a bad policy or program purely to avoid admitting the error or that money had been wasted as a result of a prior bad decision, and 37 percent were aware of poor decisions being made due to relevant information being ignored.

As in these organizations, decision making in many government entities is problematic at best and a source of woe at worst and can best be characterized as their Achilles’ heels, with poor decisions often being made to the detriment of the unit.

Do these facts regarding how thinking adversely affects organizations, their leaders, and personnel within them trouble you? If they do, remember that you can correct this problem rather easily before the situation worsens. Thinking can become as asset to you as a leader and to your organization, rather than a detriment.

Learning to Think Better

Can we be taught to think better? Certainly! Individuals can be taught to think more effectively just as you can gain prowess in learning to type or hit a golf ball. I make this statement with conviction because I have personally conducted such programs for more than 25,000 people. These professionals, many of whom work for the federal government, have held diverse positions in their organization and had widely varying educational backgrounds.

Studies of the effects of focused actions designed to improve thinking ability have been performed on more than eight thousand of these government leaders, approximately equal numbers of men and of women. The results are rather remarkable. These professionals (1) became significantly more effective in decision making; (2) solved problems more quickly and with a higher degree of correct-

ness than they formerly did, (3) engaged in creative thinking more ably and frequently, and (4) received higher job performance evaluations from superiors. In addition, their units attained a higher level of performance, and morale within units headed by these individuals became appreciably more positive.

Four-Step Action Plan

What then can be done to change thinking into a leadership and organizational asset instead of a liability? I recommend four actions (see box).

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Alert your training departments to this need. Share this article with colleagues. Remind them that decision making—as well as critical and creative thinking—are endemic to leadership and management and that they should be an integral part of leadership development programs. If they are reluctant to initiate thinking enhancement programs on a large scale, offer to have your unit be a field test of sorts for a smaller, less expensive version. After the program, participant satisfaction as well as “growth” can be assessed.

Personally embark on such an effort (if your training department is unwilling or unable). Begin by taking a thinking assessment such as the “Yale Assessment of Thinking.” This or a comparable measure will provide you with a valid database relative to your cognition strengths and weaknesses. After receiving these data, develop a plan to gain proficiency in segments of thinking in which you lack high levels of skill.

Consider involving those whom you lead in the second effort. Remember that your colleagues also need to think more powerfully and that about nine of ten—including members of your management team—have never been taught strategies for developing enhanced thinking. Many organizations want employee empowerment, but this laudable end will not have the desired results with personnel who have never been taught how to reach decisions and solve problems effectively.

Suggest enhanced thinking as a focus for conferences and other programs sponsored by various professional groups and networks associated with your profession. If you have friends in the conference planning group, lobby them on the need for such an inclusion. After you have personally led an enhanced thinking personnel development effort in your organization, suggest sharing your lessons learned. In short, get enhanced thinking on the agenda of the myriad professional groups with which you are affiliated. As others realize the benefits of acquiring skill in this area, you will garner allies who will also advocate its inclusion.

John N. Mangieri, PhD, is president of the Center for Leadership & Personnel Development. He also is an adjunct faculty member for the Federal Executive Institute and Center for Executive Leadership and an instructor for the Project Management Institute. He can be reached at Jmangieri@carolina.rr.com.



The Uncivil Servant

Grimaldi

And the election process continues—ad infinitum, ad nauseum. But listening to all the rhetoric of the campaigns took me to an examination of how the debate in the public sector has degenerated to something devoid of substance. Worse still, we have achieved “doublespeak,” a term often incorrectly attributed to George Orwell in 1984. And he is surely knowingly laughing from his grave about the current state of affairs due to the similarities with his vision for the future. Orwell saw a world that was very dark and dour. His future was run by all-powerful forces beyond the comprehension or control of the populace. Wait!! He is pretty much right!! It seems it is far more important to speak in euphemism, hyperbole, or even prevarication than to state the facts in a clear and concise way. And the practice is insidious. It creeps up on you little by little until the public accepts crap for the lack of a meaningful alternative. Indeed, we label Ron Paul as a “fringe candidate” precisely *because* he speaks plainly and means what he says. Were I Bill O'Reilly, I would now say, “The Syndrome loves irony above almost everything else.”

In the early 1960s, a movie was made of the Tennessee Williams play, “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,” starring Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor. In the movie, the head of the family, appropriately called “Big Daddy,” rails against the mendacity in his family. And that is what today’s political rhetoric amounts to.

The topper of recent cases is probably “Mission Accomplished” uttered by the president thirteen seconds after the Iraq War started. He must have thought the phrase referred to landing on the aircraft carrier where this was reported as major news. Suffice it to say that we are now five years into this “accomplished” feat. Gee, Grimaldi must not understand the concept of accomplished as in “done.” Worse yet, we are still trying to find out what the “mission” was to be that was so speedily “accomplished.” People who parse politics for a living might call this reverse rhetorical engineering, for example, what did the (Fill in the elected title of the official you most like to complain about. Party affiliation has no relevance.) _____ mean when s/he said s/he was for the proposal? S/he could not have meant it, the logic continues, because that would have meant s/he was against its opposite, which of course the common wisdom does not hold. You get the idea.

In Denial

So what are we talking about? Memories are still sharp of President Clinton parsing the word “is” during his impeachment trial. This sad example came from the question of whether he had had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. Gee, isn’t this a rather simple choice between “yes” and “no”? One would assume he, of all people, would know. (Monica might be excused as an intern, but Bill was major league.) Grimaldi can recall all of the sexual encounters he has had. But then it is possible one could

have more exploits than it is possible to remember. This would seem to be more a problem of good fortune than memory capacity.

Let’s jump forward to Senator Craig trying to sell the notion that he was not soliciting sex when he reached under the men’s room stall to “converse” with his next stall neighbor. (Is that the right term?) The count of people who have

now stepped forward to say they had had intimate interactions (See how easy it is to fall into the trap!) is up to eight. Did he think in the day of the Internet that this wouldn’t happen? At least the Catholic Church could claim separation of church and state as protected by the Constitution. Our founding fathers did not find the need for such protection for miscreant senators. Of course, it is well known that non-outed gay public figures were not invented until the 1980s. And who would have guessed at the number we have had since?

Similarly, we have nondenial denials of what public people have actually said. We have Kerry in the last election who was for the war and then against it. No less an expert in political calculus than Hillary Clinton has had to spend a great deal of time explaining how both a vote for the war was against and that being against the Iraq war is not inconsistent with voting for it. Verbal prestidigitation doesn’t do enough to describe how one must twist the mind to get around such reasoning.

In Search of Truth

A similar problem concerns the subject of abortion. First, in the search for something approximating truth, no one is *for* abortion—not even the most fervent advocates for the right to choose! Without getting into the substance of the debate, for there is clearly room for disagreement, the sin is committed when the opposition labels itself “pro-life” to create the impression that the other side takes glee in killing babies. This is the point

Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My!



at which public debate degrades into something akin to the Hatfields and McCoys losing sight of what began their long-lasting feud. Grimaldi used to work with a descendent of the Hatfields, and while she couldn't articulate the spark that lit the hills of Appalachia, she sure could hold a grudge with the best of 'em.

The problem is not unique to American politics. It is inherent in the modern, human condition. In this time of ten-second sound bites passing for fact and news, it is very difficult if not impossible to give proper context to complex issues. And we consumers of this tripe *demand* simplicity. What is a poor, public figure to do? Take President Chavez of Venezuela. Here is a budding, petty dictator trying to pass himself off as a populist. Not even Ahmadinejad in Iran is as adept at presenting an innocent face to the world while pursuing a murderous course against Westerners. The bright spot for Venezuelans is that they are so over this bravado that they voted down his preposterous version of democracy. "President Chavez," Grimaldi wants you to know, in a paraphrase of Senator Lloyd Bentsen during the vice presidential debate of 1987, "is no Fidel Castro."

This pernicious path takes many forms. Hillary Clinton's declaring herself the most experienced candidate in the Democratic field with Senators Biden and Dodd on the stage can only be deemed hubris. Between them they have almost ten times more years in public office than she. One political cartoonist recently depicted Senator Clinton campaigning in Iowa using this line. The caption has skeptical voters saying, "Oh, good. I now know to vote for Laura Bush!"

Obscuring Truth

Grimaldi is an equal opportunity scorn teller. The practice of manipulating language to obscure the truth is universal and knows no one party or country. The leader of Pakistan, who is going through his own brand of self-inflicted hell lately, came to power as a result of a coup d'état of the democratically elected government because he declared there was an emergency. (Although the emergency remains undocumented, reliable sources indicate that Musharraf was worried he would lose his privileges with the lone state Mercedes limo.) Now, only a few years later, he dispenses with the Supreme Court, that bastion of protection in any democracy, when they seemed ready to rule against his dictatorial decrees. Frankly, the world would see this as the desperate actions of another two-bit potentate—except this potentate has nukes!

Torture is not torture. It is "aggressive interview techniques." Remember when Ronald Reagan said trees were causing pollution because they emitted carbon dioxide when in decay? Gee, how come he didn't win a Nobel Prize for that insight? The former attorney general could not remember much of anything that happened on his watch when questioned in front of a Senate committee, but he is absolutely clear that nothing wrong was done.

The height of folly was achieved when the Federal Emergency Management Agency, everyone's favorite public whipping boy, held a fake press conference to announce how good a job the agency was doing with the recent fires in California. What were they thinking?? On what planet would such a stunt be anything but indicative of the highest cynicism?? Be assured that Grimaldi is certain this was not the idea of a career official, but rather the twisted logic of a political appointee. But, come on folks, this is more Orwellian than anything the author thought up.

Let's not leave out the sports world, where Marion Jones, the track star, or Barry Bonds and Gary Sheffield of the baseball world, all extraordinary stars in their respective fields, deny what every schoolboy knows. Sheffield even stated on national TV, "Everyone knows that steroids are what is shot in the butt." This, as if any other delivery mechanism renders steroids as something more like a placebo. Not even the famous hoaxster, Clifford Irving, would try to sell this snake oil.

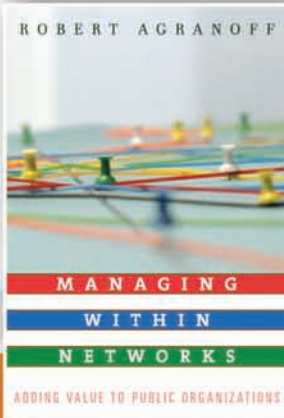
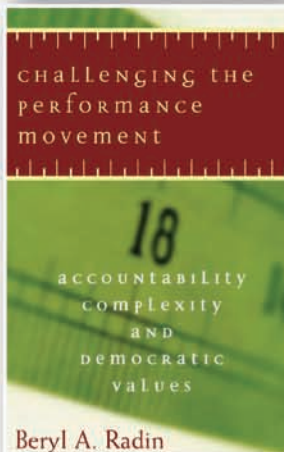
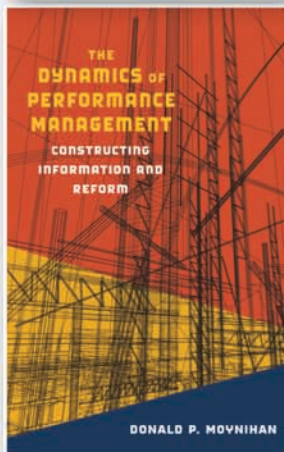
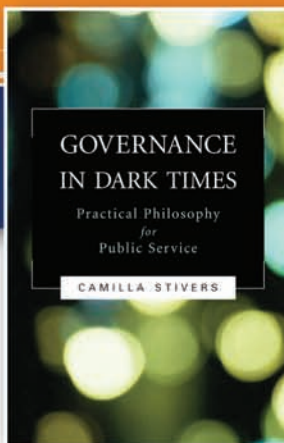
In a more abstract venue, globalization is universally touted by the academic world as a positive good for everyone. I guess these PhD economists have been sniffing the ink on their Nobel Prizes, and, therefore, could not foresee or didn't care that we now routinely seem to get lead in our toys from China and don't brush with their toothpaste. And what happened to the tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have been lost in the United States in the meantime?

Slip Sliding Along

Grimaldi thought some recent examples would help to sensitize our readers in hope that we might become intolerant of political figures using such sloppy language and bring about change.

And lest we appear totally negative about the state of honor in our society, there is Tim Tebow. The winner of the 2007 Heisman Trophy (which denotes the best player in college football) is much more than your routine jock. Here is an A student who has set all kinds of total touchdown and rushing records for his Florida Gators. He is a missionary's son, who has gone on mission himself to the Philippines. Here is a young man of great talent and accomplishment by all standards, who has not lost his humility and perspective about his place in the world. When an opposing player threatened that Tebow was "going down" in their upcoming game, Tim told the reporter looking for some grist and column inches, "Well, that sort of is the point."

In sum, truth matters. Speaking crisp, clear truth is infinitely preferable to the examples above. The hoped for momentary gain is nothing compared with the long-term consequences for the constructive dialogue our public life needs. To quote Thomas Jefferson in speaking about his vision for what became the University of Virginia, "[We will] tolerate any error so long as reason [truth] is left free to combat it." May we all do better at living by these wise words in this political season.



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